

Interview with Jane Doe

for HUM 2504: Introduction to American Studies, Prof. Emily Satterwhite

Spring 2010

Occupation: Hairdresser, Great Clips, Blacksburg, Virginia

Time and Place: March 20, 2010, 2 p.m.-2:45 p.m., Great Clips, Blacksburg, Virginia

Interviewer: Kelsey Hawes, senior interdisciplinary studies and communication major from Winchester, Virginia
Kayce Snyder, sophomore communication major from Monrovia, Maryland

KH = Kelsey Hawes

JD = Jane Doe

Kelsey Hawes: Basically, what we're going to do is ask you a little bit about yourself. So if you could start with your name, your job title, and the organization that you work for.

Jane Doe: Well, my name is Jane Doe, I go by Jane, I live in Salem, I travel up here almost every day, but its an easy drive, go back and forth no problem. I live in Salem, and this is a franchise, it's not a corporation. There are about 2,000 of these around the United States, and what it is its like another salon, but you get paid hourly, instead of commission or different and it actually is the best place to go when you're a hairdresser, and the way the economy's been, not many people are willing to go out, and get color, and have all that money, so while you're not busy here you're still getting paid hourly. So you're not losing money. We get a little bit of half on commission on the products we sell. All we do is haircuts. The only chemical we do is perms, we don't do color, hopefully down the road we will, but at the moment we just do haircuts. So I'm kinda like a barber.

KH: Ok, and the name of this is...

JD: Is Great Clips.

KH: So tell me a little bit about your family background.

JD: My family background. (Laughs) Well, what do you want to know about the family background?

KH: Well what is your current family situation?

JD: Ok, well I have an older sister, she works in New York, she lives in New York in Brooklyn and she works for the New York Rangers hockey team up there, she's their graphics designer. (Laughs) Yea, I like Christmas'. And she does that, and she's married. And my mom, she did live in New Castle, she just recently moved to Salem, she's a single mother and she lives with my aunt, my dad and her divorced years and years ago. My dad, he lives in Troutville, I don't talk to him much, but I say 'Hey' every once and a while and go on about the day. And that's pretty much it. We don't have a very big family because we don't really associate so much because we're so busy so the only family that I really consist of is my mom and my sister.

KH: Do you live with your mom?

JD: No. I used to live with her when I got out of my first apartment a while back and didn't know how to use money correctly, and I had to go back and build and pay off my debt, and get this job too. I did live with her for a little bit, but then I left. And this is when we were out in New Castle, so out in the woods, we lived about 15 miles from Paint Bank, and it took me an hour to get here from work actually. I'm very close to mom. She actually lives in the same apartment complex as I do down there, she lives in the townhouses, so she's a little bit that way. She lives with my aunt so they're taking care of each other and stuff like that. She's a bus driver for the city of Salem, and she used to be an Abbot bus driver. She would take this minor-league baseball team, who were called the Augusta Green Jackets, and their sponsors was San Francisco, I think. No, yea. Something like that. Anyway... So she drove them around, and stuff like that, that's pretty much it.

KH: Now are you married or are you single?

JD: I am single.

KH: All right, so, lets see. How long have you worked at this job?

JD: About a year.

KH: About a year? What would you describe a typical day like?

JD: A typical day. Well, let's see here. Well, that's really hard, because my days, well all the days together, we'll be busy one minute then we'll be slow the next. Our typical days really you come in and you open the shop, you put combs up, you do laundry, you just get set up, and you sweep around, you know, smoke a cigarette before you open the shop, and then just go from there daily. During the day when we're not busy, we do sweep around, we do clean, we make sure that our products, gels, are good. Just the basic common sense kind of stuff. The only hard thing about this job is cleaning those Shop Vacs with all the hair we've sucked up. That's the worst part of the job. Other than that its pretty

much typical day and the thing that's interesting about this Great Clips I think is different from everybody else, there's one in Salem and one in Roanoke, is that we're very close. We're like family. We hang out, we get drunk together, I mean the whole nine yards. We're very much like family. And it's pretty good, that's why I stay up here, because of the people and the environment. Its nice to work out here near Tech where its people my age and I don't have to try to impress too much. You know what I'm saying? It's just a good cliental base, its really good. And the people are very very nice up here. Now when y'all are gone, it sucks. (Laughs)

KH: Pretty slow?

JD: Yeah it's slow. It's boring. The ABC store isn't doing anything; the Wine Cellar ain't doing anything. So, that's pretty much what we do on a typical day here. Just pretty much take care. And the other thing too that's different about Great Clips is we use our hand mirrors. And that's constantly to show 'Hey is this what you want in the back, is this what you want on the sides,' and then you do it and you show it again. And not many salons do that. So that's what makes Great Clips different from everybody else, is that we go through a five step process. We do a consultation, create the cut, recommend the products, guarantee money back and something else that I forgot. It's in there somewhere but that's pretty much what you do. So that's what makes it different from everybody else, that we go by those steps.

KH: So, if the worst part is sucking all the hair out of the machines, would the best part be maybe the relationship with the other employees?

JD: Oh yes, definitely. The best part is relationship with employees. When you're a hairdresser, when you're a cosmetologist, you have to love what you do. If you don't love what you do, you're not going to do well with haircuts. And we actually fired a girl a while back who messed up some haircuts. And that's because she didn't have a passion for it. So you have to really like the job, and you also really have to - with the people here it makes it ten times better. You feel comfortable, you don't feel like your going to have somebody going behind your back and say something. I mean it's just so relaxed, I mean that's what we do. Come in, relax, I mean we're professional but at the same time we're like 'Hey, What's Up, What you want?' (Laughs)

KH: Low key environment

JD: Low: key environment, it's not so strict, it's very relaxed, and yeah; the best of the job is liking the people you work with. If you don't like the people you thing work with, then your just going to struggle, yea, it's going to suck and you won't like your job. But the best part about it is making that client happy. That's what made me want to do this was cuz I wanted to make people feel good when they leave. I've always felt that way when I had my hair cut. I was like 'Yea! I'm

ready to go! Go to the swing set and show off!” Like when you’re a kid and you get that wonderful haircut. But that’s what I’ve heard about it.

KH: And when that doesn’t work and you get a bad haircut, you feel bad for the hairdresser.

JD: The thing is is that nobody’s perfect. No hairdresser on this planet, not even Tabitha herself out there in Hollywood is perfect. I mean, she’s good, but nobody’s perfect. So when, a lot of people don’t understand, when we mess up on a haircut, I know for me I’ll come back here and start crying. Be like ‘Man I just need to quit my job, I just don’t need to do this no more.’ And that’s the hard part about is that you do mess up on somebody and it does hurt you a little bit and it takes your confidence down. Most hairdressers when they mess your hair up they don’t give a rat’s ass, but people like us here we really do care. And that’s the thing about people when they get bad haircuts; they need to realize, you know, it makes us look bad. We have people sitting out there and, you know, they see I just jacked this woman’s hair up. It makes people nervous.

KH: Well, the fact that you all care probably makes it a more successful business.

JD: Yea, oh yea. Yea, definitely, that’s the only way, is to make a successful business is you have to love what you do. If you don’t, then why the hell are you here? Why the hell are you wasting your school time going to cosmetology, why are you wasting everybody else’s time, why take up a chair when another hairdresser could use it? So that’s pretty much how it is.

KH: So, the school, as in what kind of training did you have to go through? JD: I

went to Barpalma Beauty Careers Academy, and that’s in Roanoke. It’s off Franklin Road. It’s a little academy, and in the state of Virginia you have to go to a credited school. You can do apprenticeship, but you’d rather just go to school, because if you’re going to do apprenticeship, you’re going to be in it longer. You’re not really going to get paid very good, and you’re not going to get the full training you need, cuz you’re learning under somebody else’s wing. So you need to have different people working with you so you can have multiple ways of cutting hair, coloring. So you have to, in the state of Virginia, you have to be in school for about 1500 hours, which is a year, and then you have to take your exams there. And then once you pass your exams, then you pass the academy and you get your diploma, you have to go to straight to stay forward, and you have to do a practical, which means your in a room with a bunch of other ladies, and your working on mannequins. And they tell you ‘Ok I want you to roll these perm rods in this amount of minutes, and I want you to show me how you put the chemical on it.’ And I mean these women are scary, they were – they have white suits, they were walking around, they write stuff, you don’t know what they’re writing about. I mean, the biggest thing state board is on is sanitation. I sanitized my hands so many times, they were dry and they were crumbling, my

skin was like ughh. But, that's what you have to do. So it would take about a year, a little over a year to get it all together. But then when you get your license, you should start out at a place like this. I didn't, and it killed me. I didn't make no money. Because nobody knew me. So when you start out here, you just build up cliental, and then when you're ready to leave, you're like 'Hey, I'm going to this shop, follow me' and then that's where you start your whole process. But it takes about a year or two to build up your cliental. Because its going to take a while for people to recognize you and spread the word and all that good stuff.

KH: So you said you work on an hourly rate here. How do you think your annual income reflects on the amount of work you put into daily?

JD: In all honesty, I know I could be paid more. I know I could be making more money right now. Because you're going through franchise, which means taxes, everything. Like anything I get on credit cards will be taken out of my check. We don't turn in the cash tip money; we only turn in what's credit cards. Yes, I do feel like, you know, I make about \$7.75 an hour, so \$8 now here soon. And its great and all hourly, but when you worked on so many people for so many days, like on average I work 13-15 people a day, so if you added up all the haircuts I could do, I could receive another 300, 200 bucks. And I'm not. I'm getting it in a check, and it's not a very high check. The highest I've gotten here is \$500. So yeah, I do feel like I can make, I should be making more money, but at the time right now, I'm just taking it one step. Because I like my job here, and it will get better, its just there's no, you can't rush when you're in a business like this. You just can't. I love my job. I wish I got paid more (Laughs)

KH: Everybody does.

JD: Man, really. But it pays my bills, and it gets me through the day.

KH: Do you think that the fact that your location is Blacksburg, that the small town has an affect on the amount of money you're bringing in? As opposed to locations like DC or somewhere?

JD: Oh yeah, because, yeah, because in Roanoke and Salem, they're constantly busy, they deal about over 100 people a day. Yeah, it's not much college town. I think the reason why we don't do that many, you know, that successful, is because we're in a college town, and when kids, y'all are gone, it slows everybody down, and all you have left are the townies, well there aren't that many townies, you know, because a lot of it was just majority students. But, either way it works. It just somehow works out. Now I know that up in DC and places? Yeah, they're probably making a lot more money than we are. But that's because we're small time. I do believe that. Now when y'all are here, we do really good. Because I mean you all have interviews you go to, graduation. Graduation last year, I mean busy. Kids were graduating that day, coming in, getting their haircut, and

I'm like 'Dude you're late for your graduation.' Just put a hat on, you'll be all right.

KH: Now do you find that because y'all don't do color, that maybe you get more boys?

JD: Yes. Well, I think if we did color, we would be making a lot more money. The reason we don't do color, is because a client is supposed to wait no longer than 15 minutes. Then they get behind the chair and they should be there about 15 minutes too. So they have a time restriction, but sometimes nobody ever really goes with it, like I take more than 15, because I go through, and check, and make sure that they're happy with it. Because customers come first, not the haircut. Those people are the ones that are paying my bills.

KH: And you maintain that "barber shop" feel.

JD: Yeah, you do. The guys, I just think there's too many boys in this town, come in.

KH: I'm not complaining!

JD: I'm not complaining either! I mean if you could see some of them that walk in here, oh Lord we won't go into that. No, we won't go into that. If we did color, yes, we'd be more successful and we probably would be making more money. But, franchise. And we've discussed it with them plenty of times and they still won't do it. But the thing they don't understand – see the franchise is built by people who don't know how to cut hair. So I'm sure some of them do, but a lot of them are in there for the money. So they want us to do perms, but doing a perm is the same amount of time as a color. But they don't want to have all that waiting.

KH: They like the turnover rate.

JD: Yeah, pretty much to make money. But see, you can put color in somebody's hair, and go do a haircut real quick while it's sitting. But they don't realize that. But, Great Clips, man. What can you do about it? You know, so, at least we work on both men and women, unlike them over there. So, it's nice. And I don't have a problem with men coming in here. Men's hair is so easy, I swear. I mean, they're easy to please. I could show anybody, take the clippers.

KH: Well, going back to you living in Salem, and you said transportation is so easy to come into work every day, how has the expenses affected that?

JD: It does take a lot of gas money. That is the one thing. But at the same time, I make up for it. I make up my amount of gas to come up here and work. When I'm busy and I make good money, I'm like 'Well, all right. It was worth the drive up.' I mean when you go down 81 all the time, like up and down it, all in one

day, it's not a problem. Put in a good CD and just you'll be fine. So no, it doesn't affect me too much. It does affect me moneywise, but I make up for it.

KH: Have you felt a difference in how cost has affected you for other material things, maybe clothes, or family life, or anything like that?

JD: Yeah, well the way, the economy's so bad, and I mean its bad. I mean being here; people can't even afford a \$13 haircut. It tells you a lot, but I don't remember the last time I went shopping for clothes. I don't remember going on a trip. I mean the money I make here is what pays my bills and that's it. So, down the road, the longer I'm here and the more I get paid, it'll get better. But right now, no, I'm not able to buy clothes, and go on little trips or something like that because there's always the driving. So yeah it does affect me a little bit and it pisses me off, but at the same time, that's ok I'll make good money down the road, I'll make up for it.

KH: And you have a job.

JD: Yeah

KH: That's what's hard for a lot of people to come across.

JD: That's what I say to people who ask me why I drive up here. Because it's a job. When I was in Salem and they asked me to come up here, I didn't have a job. So yeah, I'll be up there.

KH: So if you could change one thing about work, maybe the wages, or if you have any benefits, or anything like that, what would you change?

JD: Benefits would. Benefits. When you're a hairdresser, you have no health benefits at all. None. You are on your own. And that, I would rather have health benefits and anything more than money, because, if you cut your hands up or like if I break my hands and stuff, that's it. I mean I can't do anything forever, for a good while. So yes, benefits, that's the one thing I would change.

KH: So do you have a memorable customer you can tell us about? Or any crazy stories?

JD: Well. What's the limit on this one?

KH: What's the first one that pops into your mind?

JD: I wanted a client here, who was here on the 1st. And she was a black lady. And I didn't realize this, but when I had my clippers behind her she clocked out. And I almost cut her. And I was like 'I'm not doing this, somebody do it please.'

But that's the only thing. I've had people come here stoned, drunk, I mean hilarious, talkative, I mean there's so many. So many. Most memorable here, though, was, I didn't work on her, our old manager did. But I was here the day it happened. This lady, I guess she was a worker for a mental hospital or something, and she was bringing in this guy, and what they're trying to do is teach these people how to work out in society so they can be a part of it, you know? Show them things, tell them things, ok this is what you do, just to get into it, and well, our manager at the time, was a very, very pretty girl. Tan, dark hair, green eyes, big, I mean everything. She was drop dead gorgeous, she was really good. And she cut his hair, and she looked down, and noticed he was messing with himself under the cape, so she ran in the back here and called a salon and told our assistant manager that this man is messing with himself under the jacket, under his cape, and she couldn't do it no more. So we had to get out gay stylist to come over there and take care of him.

KH: Isn't that worthy of getting arrested?

JD: Well, she flipped about it. She told the worker and said 'this isn't right, how is he supposed to get into society when your jacking off? That's not really helping the situation' And she's like 'you're lucky I didn't call the police and have it be...Actually we had another one last week. Yeah, (laughs...another hairdresser remembers the incident also) He was mental, but he couldn't really be keeping us off. I don't ever look at the capes when I have men. I don't even, just go. I don't want to see it, I don't want to see it thumping, if you got to do it, do it. But I don't want to see it and I don't want to know it.

KH: So then, how do these kind of experiences, not just that, affect the rest of your day? Like whether someone's really happy with their cut, or I know you said you come in and you get upset if you haven't really satisfied a customer.

JD: Well, we do get customers who are very rude, and they are very demanding and don't really have any time for time to wait, for like five minutes to get their haircut. People like that, it pisses you off for a good two to three hours if you're busy, but after that its no big deal, you just go on. Its just very, you have to learn to really, one thing about this job you really have to learn what you say, and how your body language is when you're mad. But its part of working with the public, you're going to deal with assholes like that every once in a while. Now the people who come in and they're all happy, and regulars, and they laugh, and joke, those are the people that really make a difference in your day. But the worst I think is kids. Little kids. For instance today I didn't even cut this boy's hair because he was crying like a little pussy. And he had his haircut before, but he didn't want it. He kept crying, he didn't want it. I was like 'man I'm not going to cut your hair if you're going to act like that.' The kids are what gets the worst. This job, you can ask anybody in this job, this job is our birth control. The kids that come in here that are good, makes you want to have kids. Kids

that come in here and like crazies, they're not disciplined, they're spoiled, and their parents suck, those don't make you want to have kids.

KH: So what advice would you give to someone who wants to join Great Clips and become a hairdresser?

JD: Love what you do, have patience, and be confident in yourself. I think when it comes to working on people's hair, you have to have confidence. So if you're going to come into this business and your going to deal with all kinds of people, your going to do nothing but haircuts, so you kind of, that's where the patience comes in. And the really, confidence. You're going to deal with somebody different every day. That's what I would tell them. Just, really mainly, I know I've said it a million times, but you really have to like this job. If you don't like it, you're not going to care about the cuts; you're just going to worry about the money. I've worked with people like that before, and it doesn't make the environment any better, so you've got to love what you do. And just, be confident when you come in here.

KH: Well I can tell that you love it. So where do you think you see yourself in five to 10, 15 years.

JD: Well, I see myself down the road in a few years maybe, getting married and having kids and, I really want to have my own shop. I want to be able to where, I'd have a big old patio in the back, and I want it to where I'm facing the mountains and I want to have stations out there with umbrellas so people, when it's a nice day like this, you can come out, get your haircut, serve lemonade. Something like that.

KH: I don't know if I've seen or heard anything like that, would you stay here in Blacksburg, New River area?

JD: Probably. I mean the one thing I've learned is this areas really good about kids, about you guys, because y'all are the ones that keep this town coming. I mean going. So oh yeah, I would start here. Definitely.

KH: And you've got the mountains.

JD: Yeah, exactly.

KH: All right, well I think that about wraps it up unless you have anything else you want to add.

JD: Anything I want to add. Let's see. Future references to anyone that might listen to this tape, please don't be an asshole to your dresser. Be nice to her, because if you get really picky and frustrating, we're eventually going to say 'you know what? I don't give a crap about your hair,' and we're just going to mess it up.

KH: (laughs) Noted.

JD: Well, when you have somebody in your chair and they're constantly picky, picky, picky, picky, no matter what you do, they're still pissed off, its like, I don't give a damn, cut it yourself. So be nice, be nice to your hairdresser!

KH: Well thank you, thank you so much.