

**Urban Marketplaces and Mobile Vendors: The Flea Market in the
Metropolitan Economy**
A Case Study of Two Flea Markets – Aqueduct and Roosevelt Raceway Flea Markets

by

Les Abrams

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment
of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New
York

2007

UMI Number: 3245031

Copyright 2007 by
Abrams, Les

All rights reserved.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3245031

Copyright 2007 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

2007

Les Abrams

Copyright All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date

Chair of Examining Committee – Dr.W. Kornblum

Date

Executive Officer – Dr. L. Churchill

Dr. W. Kornblum

Dr. C. Smith

Dr. L. Churchill
Supervision Committee

**URBAN MARKETPLACES AND MOBILE VENDORS: THE FLEA MARKET IN
THE METROPLITAN ECONOMY**
*A CASE STUDY OF TWO FLEA MARKETS – AQUEDUCT AND ROOSEVELT RACEWAY FLEA
MARKETS*

By

Les Abrams

Advisor: Dr. William Kornblum

Two flea markets were researched from an interactionist perspective. Two research goals provided the central themes in this dissertation: 1) an ethnographic study of two hugely successful flea markets – Aqueduct Racetrack Flea Market (in Queens) and Roosevelt Racetrack Flea Market (in Suburban Long Island) – both in the New York area 2) an interactionist perspective – economic actors participating in a variety of exchanges with a socio-cultural perspective. Rather than economic activity being classified as a separate entity from society as in the neo-classical economic theoretical framework, a dramaturgical, approach actually demonstrates that normative behavior in terms of cooperation, inclusion and fair play in business transactions have proven to be advantageous. An amalgamation of feelings of excitement in being part of the flea market action scene, combined with a multitude of fashions and cultural impact, form the basis of some of the ingredients adding to the spectacle that has made flea markets a huge success. Other variables describing the relatedness of economics and society were politics, local traditions, capital formation and sociability. In short, the regulations, which control economic life, cannot be explained purely in economic terms.

Three groups were researched: manufacturers/suppliers, vendors, and shoppers. Each was described in detail as my family and I were vendors in these markets for more than six years. Furthermore, the cash underground economy and its relationship to the flea markets and economic participants were explored. Though there were no formal institutional laws in the cash underground economy, embeddedness of cultural variables such as trust, and the presentation of self, the formation of identity, ego gratification and power relations were described from an “insider’s” vantage point.

Assuming that flea market business activity could be reduced to a few a priori assumptions is simply unrealistic. Hopefully, this study will add to the understanding of the workings and success of flea markets, as well as to the development of economic sociology, and as an impetus to a paradigm shift away from neo-classical economic thinking.

Acknowledgements

It is with deep appreciation and a heartfelt thank-you to those individuals – professors and other intimate others in my life – family and friends who have made this success story possible. My first professor in graduate school Dr. Chang Boh Chee saw a struggling wanna be intellectual trying to come to terms with Vietnam and the ‘sixties’, society, and social and economic policies, and took me under his tutelage in a loving and profound way. The graduate faculty – Dr. Joseph Bensman, Professor Osteracher, Professor Mike Brown, Professor Ray Franklin, Professor Jack Hammond, Professor Charlie Smith, Professor Lindsey Churchill and Professor Bill Kornblum – all dedicated – scholars and gentlemen. Furthermore, the Socialist Scholars Conferences were amazing – thank-you Stanley Aronowitz. There are so many others to thank as George Fischer, etc... These people help enlighten the world and make it a better place to live.

A special thanks to Hofstra University library staff and Administration Services. Their generosity of spirit, expertise, and long lending policy has been immensely helpful in completing the dissertation.

Others have offered encouragement and guidance: Thank-you Mom and Dad; and also, my brother Robert and sister in law Rita. The Kew Gardens Community especially Meir Orlofsky and his wife Joan and their entire family have been a source of inspiration and joy. Wow! My friend Meir Deitch and wonderful others too numerous to mention -
THANK-YOU ALL!

Table of Contents

1. Urban Market Places and Mobile Vendors: The Flea Market in the Metropolitan Economy.
 - 1.1. Introduction – page 1
 - 1.2. Central Issues – page 4
 - 1.3. Statement of the Problem – page 5
 - 1.4. Questions Posed – page 7
 - 1.5. Overview – page 8
 - 1.6. Literature Review, Conceptual Development – page 10
 - 1.7. Methodology – page 22
2. Theoretical Framework – Flea markets as exchange sites in an
 - 2.1. Urban Setting – page 24
3. Location of market sites, embeddedness of culture and capital influences and internal structures – page 31
4. Informal Retailing – Vendors, the entrepreneurial spirit, and perspectives on working the market – page 48
5. Consumer rationale for shopping the market – page 57
6. Manufacturers/ Suppliers – The connection to the informal economy flea market success – page 69
7. Flea markets as democratic process – consumption, resistance, empowerment, and fun – page 83
8. Conclusion and implications for a paradigm shift – page 99
9. Notes – page 105
10. Bibliography – page 106

Chapter 1

Urban Marketplaces and Mobile Vendors: The Flea Market in the Metropolitan Economy

I. Introduction: Flea Markets and Market Institutions, Marketplaces, and the Growth of the Informal Economy

This dissertation is about flea markets. It explores the nature of flea markets and the marketplace systems in contemporary postindustrial society. In our daily experience, it is clear that there are many types of markets and marketplaces, each with its own economic and social character. The dissertation focuses on two particular marketplaces-urban centered Aqueduct Raceway Flea Market in South Ozone Park, Queens, N.Y. and suburban Roosevelt Raceway Flea Market in Westbury, Long Island, N.Y. The major thrust of the research is to determine the motivations for participation in flea markets as vendors, as shoppers, (sometimes as both), and suppliers. Is it in terms of economic motivation and/or social considerations that attract huge numbers of people to these marketplaces? In postmodern society and economy, flea markets may be considered by some social scientists as pre-modern, part of a traditional economy that survives only on the fringes of modern society. Yet, flea markets are flourishing in a vast network of what has come to be known as the cash-underground economy. It has been called the informal economy or alternative economy because of the wide use of cash, the lack of formal record keeping, avoidance of tax payments at the legalized level, and the importance of trust in the social relationships among economic actors. The lack of the state's full regulatory intervention is as a prime motivation for many individuals

as vendors, shoppers, and suppliers to partake in this type of market (Miller 1987; Sherry 1990). Flea markets offer an alternative to the dominate economy of retail outlets, boutiques and malls. As exchange sites of a virtually unlimited supply of goods and services, flea markets successfully operate with basic characteristics of efficiency and informality within a social structure of cooperation, reciprocity, and informal networks usually not found within the primary capitalistic economy. The flea market success story of American life has not been fully appreciated in contemporary scholarship. Mass production in capitalist economy is somewhat limited in its capacity to meet the needs of a substantial segment of the population. Flea markets therefore should not be seen as part of a romantic past, or as part of a pre-industrial economy, but as a vibrant alternative to the economic, cultural and social world of today. This type of marketplace continues to serve specific needs in industrial and postindustrial societies filling in where the primary or conventional economy falls short allowing for alternative forms of entrepreneurial and consumption activity. The openness, less restrictive, and adventurous style of these markets is widely known and appreciated. This engages the world of consumerism in a wide range of contexts which play out in specific ways such as class, race, gender and ethnicity. The dynamics sustaining these themes of informal retailing are detailed within the dissertation. These social and economic territories are profound rather than trivial developments in human values and beliefs in a post- modern world. I am seeking to go beyond a static model of the market place to a more viable perspective with complex social and economic actors embedded in culture, ethnic backgrounds, lifestyles and outlooks that are both socially and economically

constructed. In the emerging field of economic sociology, therefore, the traditional conception of the market is called into question. Some classical economic postulates which are considered in this dissertation are: the separation of markets as functioning entities apart from society, operating by mechanical or a priori laws as a template, with individuals coldly calculating the maximization of their assets (utility). A set of known preferences are supposedly axiomatic in guiding economic actors' decisions. This is clearly not a reality for anyone who has been to a flea market. These economic assumptions must be placed within a broader context-a social setting that includes among other variables- the cultural and human relationships in each market setting.

The proposed dissertation offers a detailed analysis of the flea market as a specific market place and market institution. It is not by economics alone that markets function; yet, this dissertation concerns itself with the extent to which economic action is embedded in structures of social relations (the concept of rationality for example) as well as social concerns embedded in economic relations within the phenomenal success of flea markets (fashions, style, preferences, and personal taste). The aim of the dissertation is to improve the current understanding of flea markets and show the human side of the marketplace – both economic as well as social. As such, this work contributes to the development of contemporary economic sociology by extending the boundaries of sociology into economic areas that have traditionally been too narrowly and rigidly drawn. It is within this context that the research will add to an emerging body of knowledge of economic actors and how

they are empowered in these marketplaces establishing meaning in their lives by choosing and assigning value to commodities in the activity of shopping.

B. Central Issues: Flea markets have become a major part of a retail revolution in the consumer culture as new settings (from factory outlet stores to garage sales) are increasing, for several reasons. These specific marketplaces empower vendors, suppliers/manufacturers, and shoppers. It has become a source of a re-vitalization of business opportunities for small business oriented entrepreneurs. The role of women and minorities, income earned off the books, an outlet for suppliers/manufacturers of vast amount of consumer goods, and as a shoppers paradise for those active participants appreciating an atmosphere of enchantment, adventure, and bargains. Flea markets have become ways of revolutionizing the means of consumption. They are not just exchange sights but have become the new cathedrals of consumption. “In order to attract ever-larger numbers of consumers, such cathedrals of consumption need to offer, or at appear to offer, increasingly magical, fantastic, and enchanted settings in which to consume” (Ritzer 1999, 8).

The present study builds upon the emerging research into flea market activity. It attempts to add in the understanding of the social construction of a self-regulating market system which will gross more than 10 billion dollars annually (Sherry 1990a). Concomitantly, the research focuses on some of the experiential aspects of buying and selling. The holistic perspective and ethnographic approach of this dissertation are offered in part as a corrective to reductionist views of marketplace behavior.

C. Is there a need for a paradigm shift in neo-classical economics to explain the widespread existence of alternative markets? Current economic research and theory does not adequately describe nor help to fully understand the flea market phenomena. Its rigid emphasis on economic considerations and seeing other variables as interfering with market mechanisms does not truly reflect the diverse complexities of the cultural and social embeddedness of flea markets, and therefore its ability to be accurate and instrumental in aiding understanding of alternative market systems is quite limited.

This dissertation addresses the need for the furtherance of knowledge concerning this alternative market site. Specifically, how are flea markets embedded in the larger culture, community, and social structure? The paramount questions are how flea markets actually work and why individuals would choose to be so intensely involved in them, In essence, why flea market? What is it about this style of market and its qualities that attracts so many people that want to work there as vendors, shop as customers, and do business as manufacturers? The flea market has become a major site for what anthropologist Sol Tax has called “penny capitalism” (1963, 13). “Flea market capitalism (Abrams 2005) or mini capitalism (Maisal 1974, 489) allow for the opportunity for small scale entrepreneurs to set-up a business with small amount of capital. Having few starting fees or start-up costs facilitate the process of being successful, and increases the probability of making a profit the same day. Some other variables that attract sellers to the flea market are: opportunity, easy access at

the entry level, an entrepreneurial spirit, the idea of being one's own boss, action and money-usually cash.

Shopping at flea markets has become spectacularly attractive to consumers. Though there is some uncertainty associated with buying at flea markets – lack of quality standards of some commodities, the frequent absence of receipts, lack of permanence in vendor location, varying policies by individual vendors concerning the return of merchandise – there are several major enticements that give rise to the thriving and growing popularity of flea markets. Many people shop with the hope of finding bargains, unforeseen 'must have' items, lower prices, paying on taxes, and a sense of serendipity, adventure and fun. Flea markets help to empower consumers by allowing consumption to be more personalized and self-defining. (The concept of 'shoppertainment' – transforming a utilitarian retail experience into an entertainment-eating-socializing-shopping destination is an everyday reality at these marketplaces.)

This dissertation will explore the reasons why this type of marketplace is so popular. It will demonstrate that exchanges of commodities are not just economic but in fact are also embedded in a social/cultural context and worthy of sociological consideration (Appadurai 1986; Becker 1976; Granovetter 1985). There is a multidimensional aspect which at flea markets are constituted by a number of variables not adequately recognized in the primary economy, nor in the neo-classical perspective: the fact that flea markets take advantage of large open spaces, respond to different legal and market situations in a cooperative manner, have a less structured fixed price system. and a high degree of enchantment among its

participants. To understand the flea market as an exchange site that assigns meaning and value to commodities (Appadurai 1986; Smith 1989), one must take into account the origins and ethnicity of individual actors, cultural influences effecting different styles of decision making, and varied cognitive abilities that process information dissimilarly. It is my contention that the templates of the anonymous market of neo-classical models are virtually nonexistent in the economic life of flea markets as institutions. Business relations are “mixed-up with’ or embedded in personal and social relations, extensive coalitions, and cooperation (Grenovetter 1985); this is essential for success of flea markets in the contemporary scene in American society. “The embeddedness of social relations of individual actors in marketplaces are more important than authority hierarchy within the form in bringing order to economic life” (Williamson 1975, 549). This is a major factor of the success and empowerment of individuals at flea markets. Friendships, cooperation, and shared values, increases flexibility and adaptability to market conditions. It represents the classical Hobbesian dilemma of institutional control of organizing, and economic efficiency. The seeming paradox of the informality of the flea market, its complex heterogeneity, and patterns of integration into a fluid market system will be a major part of this dissertation. Flea markets are an opportune site to research and develop a view of economic agents as socially constructed by necessity having to interact with culture, norms, politics, and by extension, preferences, choices, and knowledge, and courses of action that are a result of social interaction. This dissertation will develop a more coherent view of the workings of two flea markets from a social

construction/interactionist perspective. This will be a boon to the furtherance of economic sociology.

Lastly, the issues of determining value and price at flea market exchange sites from an interactionist perspective are considered to be grounded in the real world and as such social in nature. There is a social context and an ongoing social structure in which the definition of value is grounded. It is grounded or embedded in the community. Furthermore, there are communities or social formations of manufacturers/suppliers, vendors, and shoppers that continually re-alien their relations as the rules of exchange are sometimes modified partially due to the vast number of transactions with various degrees of formal price structure. Most transactions are considered closed contracts; yet the possibility of negotiation remains open. This does not explain in detail the multitude, the uncertainty, and variety of exchanges at flea markets in the informal economy. Oliver Williamson in his article “The Economics of Organization: The Transactional Approach,” believes the transaction is the basic unit of analysis and the relational form as an alternative form of governance is the basis for the determinations of value and price in many instances at sites other than the firm. Put differently, “transaction cost economizing needs to be located within a larger more inclusive framework and relevant trade-offs need to be recognized” (1981: 548).

Neo-classical economic theory is limited because of its primary reliance of a mechanical supply and demand model in determining value and price. This dissertation will provide a detailed, concrete analysis of this activity in the informal economy in which these flea markets are located, and show that there is, “a link

between the social environment and the regimes of value – the cultural framework that defines the commodity candidacy of things” (Appadurai, op. cit.).

The attempt is to go beyond a critique of neo-classical economic theory and describe how these two flea markets actually work. It is intended to add to the literature of flea markets functioning in consumer society, and further the development of economic sociology by showing the complex reality of these two marketplace systems.

Literature Review, Conceptual Development

To aid in organization of the literature I cited, I used two basic categories. First, are ethnographic in nature - attempting to define and describe the actual workings of these marketplaces from both a social and economic perspective. It focused on the informal (cash) underground economy in postmodern society and the success of flea markets. Secondly, as the research literature indicates, economic interpretations of the flea market have been prematurely reductionistic. Even the assumptions concerning economic foci of interests have been too narrowly construed.

In attempting to define the successes of flea markets in the informal sector, Belshaw (1965) stresses exchanges of reciprocity, tradition, commitment and a sense of responsibility as the basis for market cohesion, rather than institutional laws from the state. His focus on traditional markets and network of exchanges which he claims “bind the economy together,” provides a good starting point for the study of informal markets, but is inadequate for an in depth analysis of flea markets. Unity, according to Moreles in his study of the Maxwell Street Flea Market, forms the basis of “institutionalizing informal economic recourses” (1991, 1) from the allocation of spots, to the distribution of tables, and cooperation among vendors. He found that the combination of cultural and economic factors are part and parcel for solidifying the actual workings of flea markets rather than a reliance on formalization. He differs from Geertz in that for Geertz (1963), kinship relationships institutionalize vendor’s location in the social and physical space. A concept of legalized property-rights is

not relevant to the stable allocation of space in his study; yet, he considered it a pre-condition for modernization in Indonesia. The cash underground economy flourishes outside of the underdeveloped industrial sector in Geertz's analysis, however these flea markets discussed in this dissertation as well as others in industrialized societies are related to the primary economy politically, economically, and culturally.

Fligstein in his attempt to create a sociological view of markets by focusing on participants (vendors) trying to create a stable world (keeping markets together) by finding social solutions to issues of competition, cohesiveness, and organization. He goes beyond the creation of networks to creating social understandings – a coherent view of organizing that “allows them (economic actors) to simplify their decision making process” (1981, 659). To define, analyze, and solve problems in their own terms, a specific conception of control emerges and operates as a permanent culture. A related tactic is to involve the state in regulation or protective legislation that increases the odds of the marketplace's survival such as traffic control and emergencies. This is counter-distinctive to Morales' study as mentioned above. Morales focuses on the lack of state intervention and the propriety of informal economic resources as vendors' spots and the distribution of tables without formal legislation from state intervention. Broadening the definition and understanding of the marketplace is Fligstein's (1996) study of markets as institutions. Though not limited to flea markets, it attempts to develop a sociological understanding of what pre-conditions are necessary that allow the actual market to work. The strength of the study is that it is not just constructed as a reaction to the limits of neo-classical economic views of the functioning of markets such as its insistence stressing

anonymity of economic actors. According, his construct of markets rests upon shared rules. He considers networks to be the core of markets to the degree that they reflect social relations between actors. Yet he feels the major limitation of the network approach is its sparse social/psychological development of structures which would shed light on other factors which help make the market successful.

Gaughan and Fermerman (1987) argue that a substantial amount of activity in the informal economy is based on family and community, and reliance on such networks continues to serve specific needs in industrial and postindustrial societies, filling in where the conventional economy falls short or fails. They emphasize the freedom working and consuming in the informal sector of the economy offers in terms of reclaiming control over one's conditions of labor and lessening the affects of alienation and restriction many experience in advanced industrial societies. The individual in these marketplace settings engaged in buying and selling is seen as more 'fully developed' and is more fully realized in a humane, justice filled environment as a flea market or garage sale in terms of decision making a self-definition and setting price. As economic actors, they gain a special kind of control through participation in the flea market. In emphasizing the entrepreneurial spirit, Maisal (1974) sees flea markets as an "action scene" allowing for more entrepreneurial activity. Here is where the division between work and played are blurred, allowing for 'mini capitalism' to flourish within the interstices of society. "Action" he maintains, allows individuals to pit their skills into negotiating the best price for themselves. Citing freedom and cooperation as the main characteristics and drawing card to flea markets, McCree (1984) sees people beginning to mix in ways

that go beyond immediate survival, forming a community of vendors and shoppers. Cooperation is the essence for success. Among the primary themes discussed are: the satisfaction of adventure – the flea market allows us to be kids again, and the challenge of finding a bargain. Though the flea market’s reason for existence is the sale and exchange of goods, people are drawn to the flea market by the immense scope and variety of merchandise offered, sometimes at bargain prices.

Smith adds to the understanding of the social process of marketplaces in his book, *Auctions: The Social Construction of Value*, by illustrating the auction scene from a dramaturgical perspective by making the claim that, “auctions are inherently social processes for resolving definitional ambiguities does not deny that auctions have their economic components” (1981, 3). “When people participate in auctions they act not only as individuals intent on pursuing individual self-interests but, consciously or unconsciously, as part of a community” (Ibid., 51). He includes variables such as the allocation of goods, determining value and price, who can participate, and who is linked to whom.

Harrison, Soifer and Herrmann (1987) embodied the ‘visions of power’ and having the satisfaction of making money and feeling free to develop one’s resources. Feeling empowered by the decisions being made concerning value and price, and a sense of being in control, adds to a feeling of transcending a sense of isolation. D. Miller (1998) enhances the multifaceted nature of shopping and the importance this activity is in a consumer oriented culture by insisting three premises: 1) “a practice that reveals profound rather than trivial developments in human values and beliefs, 2) objects are a way of creating relationships of love between subjects rather than

some kind of materialistic dead end, 3) objects are located within a given cultural logic (127-128). The analysis of the shopping experience is important, yet to add in the understanding of the workings of a marketplace it needed to be located within a specific marketplace. Klaffke (2003) sensitively analyzes shopping but lacks a focus point. It is Underhill (1999) that actually analyzes shopping as an activity in malls, and though it shares some characteristic activities as flea markets, I will articulate how an alternative market offers consumers more options. The flea market is a periodic market like those of ethnographic record Sherry (1990) but its status as alternative market site has the affect of limiting conventional consumer researchers from in depth studies. He sees academic research yielding a rather small and circumscribed literature of discontinuous quality. He goes on to state, “survey research across numerous northeastern American northeastern flea markets that has explored purchase patterns and expenditures, shopping behaviors, and attitudes toward flea markets are similarly limited” (14). He suggests that instead of organizing formal/informal economy interfacing, see it as being part of one economy, and stress the economics of vendors and shoppers in actual flea market settings. He feels that a branch of this research literature clearly indicates that interpretations of the flea market have been prematurely reductionistic and that even the economic foci of interest have been too narrowly construed.

Sherry...attempts to correct these inadequacies in several important studies he conducted by exploring the economic significance of flea markets in a sociocultural holistic setting rather than in an informal/formal perspective. His conclusion that, “flea markets are rational marketplaces where consumers can purchase utilitarian

goods at fixed prices. It is also a fantastic economy with its own principles of exchange, substitution and replicability, despite its dependence upon the larger economic system. In this regard, purchase is subordinated to search, exchange value is constantly renegotiated, and use value is often aestheticized (if not eroticized). The flea market's kinship with the fair, carnival, and theatre of preceding centuries is unmistakable" (Sherry, 1990, 27). His conclusion is that flea markets have an implicit potential to challenge the consumer's conventional experience and carries within it the potential for reconstruction that experience in more satisfying ways.

The ways in which shoppers consume says a lot about an individual's self identity. John Fiske in his *Reading the Popular*, captures part of the expression of shopping and resistance to dominant cultural forms, and the potential increase in consumption of commodities this phenomena has in a less structured marketplace in the informal economy. The appeal of flea markets for many shoppers is that it offers a wide consumer choice in a semi-structured open air market, which accordingly is infused with ideology. "Popular culture is always a culture of conflict. There is always an element of popular culture that lies outside social control that escapes or opposes hegemonic forces" (2). He thus believes that shoppers are "buying a cultural resource out of which to make their own meanings, to make a statement about their own subcultural identity" (1989, 35). His discerning logic concerning popular culture as culture of conflict lends itself to understanding the popularity of flea markets as a consumption site.

Another perspective of "shopping the market" is offered by Ritzer, who extols the necessity of the consumption site to offer "enchantment, the magical, and the

fantastic - in an increasingly disenchanted world (1999, 8). The importance of the feeling of community, connectiveness, and active participation, are part and parcel to the festive, playful environment flea markets offer. His main point: “there is a tendency for people to become bored and to be put off by too much machine-like efficiency in the settings in which they consume. The challenge for today’s consumption sites is how to maintain enchantment in the face of increasing rationalization” (9). Flea markets have become a place of intense joy and satisfaction for many shoppers and vendors as this dissertation will show.

Lastly, commodities are used to construct the complexity of contemporary social relationships (Appudurai 1986; Baudrillard 1981; Schur & Holt 2000). With such a vast array of merchandise, and an eclectic number of vendors and suppliers, part of the joy of flea market shopping is the unconformity of merchandise. Shoppers, collectors, bargain hunters, hope to find the unexpected, an item with a story, or a history with which to go home and share in telling the adventure of the acquisition. It has become a major drawing card to the flea market experience.

The second major category of the research literature I used focused on neo-classical economic theory and its limitations in explaining a nuanced reality of flea market success. I intend to demonstrate that these actual marketplaces cannot be reduced to the extraordinary simplistic idealized laws of neoclassical economic theory (Becker 1988; Coleman 1987). The main postulates I focused on are: markets as separate from society, embeddedness; equilibrium as a unifying principle/disequilibrium as an economic reality; rationality and perfect knowledge/as distinct from bounded rationality and imperfect, partial information; known

preferences that seem to be static and the maximization of utility used to acquire them/ rather than satisfaction in choices and variety of cognitive processes in understanding market phenomena. There is no mono, overriding, a priori template of market capitalism that can explain the share multitude of machinations in the flea market as a specific economic exchange site. Leaving behind objectivism, positivism, and reductionism, S. M. Miller challenges the hegemonic role of neoclassical economic theory, its abstractions and the concern with large corporations. Accordingly, this is at the neglect of micro-economics, actual human interaction – its variety and constraints. These constraints are circumscribed by ethics, values and cultural embeddedness. The aim of his work is to help alleviate the lack of understanding informal economies. He goes on to state: “perceiving other forms of economic activity as deviant and as aberrant we overlook the fact that people provision themselves from a wide and diverse range of economic exchanges and transactions, with corporate-derived goods and services only fulfilling a small part of any person’s needs” (1987, 27). He focuses on four major variables comprising the informal economy: economic, social, regulatory and conditions of efficiency.

The oversimplifying and unitary view of orthodox economic theory - of a separate market that is self regulating, and self perpetuating is directly challenged by Hefner’s (1998, 4-5) consideration of “the social detail and poignancy of real economic processes underlying normative principles,” offering a human centered approach to the varieties of economic processes. His concern is to develop a more culturally and sociologically realistic understanding of market actors and action by analyzing

market processes in relation to their cultural meanings and human organization highlighting cultural and social dimensions of economic life.

The thrust of The Crises in Economic Theory, edited by D. Bell and I. Kristol, is to clash with the assumptions of a “unified economic theory” with actual economic realities. Though Kristol represents the “supply-side” of neoclassical economics, Bell’s position critiques two main themes he considers ‘master keys’ of neoclassical economics: equilibrium and rationality. He claims that it goes to the heart of the character of the social sciences as science. “But this raises a question whether the general equilibrium that one can define, the theory is a fiction, a normative standard, perhaps, against which to judge an actual economy, or a description of how economic exchanges (if unhampered) take place in accordance with the “laws” of economics. Can the theory “model reality”? He goes on to state: “The everyday world is one of sharp fluctuations in price, of gluts and shortages, of changing ratios between values, and the like” (1981, 53). This constitutes a more accurate description of the workings of actual flea markets, where cash, credit lines, and availability of merchandise rule the day of actual decision-making of economic actors.

The assumption that actors maximize objective expected utility – economic rationality supplies only a small part of the premises in economic reasoning according to Herbert Simon. Rationality is bounded, limited in knowledge and scope. “The judgment that certain behavior is “rational” or “reasonable” can only be reached by viewing the behavior in the context of a set of premises or “givens.” In its treatment of rationality, neoclassical economics is: 1) silent about the content of

goals and values, 2) (mistaken) in postulating global consistency, 3) that behavior is objectively rational” (Hogarth and Reder, 1986: 27). Accordingly, rationally maximizing is more of an estimation and attempt at satisfaction rather than as a priori set of market certainties, and therefore according to the Simon, revision is necessary which is based on scientific empirical data.

Hausman’s perspective concerning the theory of rationality in circumstances of certainty, which is central to microeconomics, is that it is a “thin theory” unless the outcome is known or expected. This is an inadequate explanation for the organization and operation of flea markets where so much depends on satisfaction of needs as opposed to the neoclassical outlook of maximization of utility. Economic actors chose to rationally maximize while realistically having imperfect or limited knowledge of market situations, some of which have according to Sherry (1990) requires, “extraeconomic activity” of sharing information, cooperation, and finesse in the marketplace. This is consisting in part of a wide range of vendor, supplier, and consumer behavior that includes risk, uncertainty, and disequilibrium in real market situations. Hausman goes on to say, “economic theory provides a unified, complete but inexact account of its domain” (1992, 93). “The method of economics is deductive, and confidence in the implications of economics derives from its axioms rather than from testing their implications” (1).

Smelser, author of The Sociology of Economic Life , believes that in fact the only real statement characterizing economic theory must be as part of a social system. In his view the economic system is embedded in institutions, and that economic motivation cannot be understood without reference to the societal context

in which it is analyzed” (1976, 38). Insightfully when discussing the relationship of sociology and economics, he poses a conundrum with respect to a priori givens or assumptions by mainstream economists. “Economic analysis faces a dilemma: whether to create theoretically advanced models while oversimplifying the non-economic world or to take account of the complexity of the non-economic world while sacrificing theoretical generality” (34). Specifically, He treats the concept of rationality as a variable rather than a principle.

One of the most important givens in traditional economic analysis is the postulate of economic rationality: If an individual I presented with a situation of choice in an economic setting, he will maximize his economic position; like wise, a firm will “choose the [input-output combination] which maximizes the difference between its total costs and revenue. Such a postulate is clearly inadequate on many counts-people are ignorant of their environment, they make mistakes, and they sometimes live by habit and rule of thumb rather than calculation. Furthermore, because the social world is characterized by the interplay of so many non-economic factors and economic variables, no one set of variables completely dominates in any social/economic setting (Ibid, p.34-35).

Accepting economic rationality as providing insight into economic behavior – it however, does not say the whole of human behavior, and in fact must be put into specific context to fully be less objectionable and more enlightening.

A major contribution in understanding the importance of social relations in the working of markets was made by Granovetter (1985) and his concept of market-embeddedness. How behavior and institutions are affected by social relations is one of the classic questions of social theory. His main concern is the extent to which economic action is embedded in structures of social relations in modern industrial society. In other words, the embeddedness of economic behavior. He argues that, “The behavior and institutions are so constrained by ongoing social relations that to

construe them as independent is a grievous misunderstanding” (482). Furthermore he goes on to state: “Classical; and neo-classical economics operates, in contrast with an atomized, under socialized conception of human action. The theoretical arguments disallow any impact of social structure and social relations on production, distribution, or consumption. Idealized markets are supposed to function without any prolonged human or social contact between parties. Under perfect competition there is no room for bargaining, negotiation, remonstrance or mutual adjustment and the various operators that contract together need not enter into recurrent or continuing relationships as a result of which they could get to know each other well” (484). Self regulating markets with atomized economic actors having perfect knowledge rationally maximizing their utility will not lead to a fruitful analysis (of understanding the workings of actual marketplaces) nor the behavior of the economic actors) he believes.

Methodology

This dissertation is an ethnographic study of two flea markets. I have extensive experience working and shopping in both market places (along with family members) for more than six years. This has afforded me the opportunity to learn about the flea market from first hand experience. Participant observation will be augmented by formal and informal interviews and discussion with suppliers, vendors, and shoppers from both marketplaces. These discussions were within the flea market before and after business hours, during business hours if inclement weather prohibited sales as individuals were usually frustrated by the disruption of activities and very willing to talk about business or shopping. I went back on different days when I wasn't working the market to look people up and let them know of my research design and their place in it. Both my Father and I have had extensive discussions over the years with various manufacturers who supplied the flea markets. Some of these discussions were recorded on audio tapes. These discussions have a semi-structure to them which has allowed me to collect data on a number of specific points, as well as subjective opinions, stories, antidotes, and advice. By presenting myself as "one of them," I have had the opportunity to enrich this social and economic research by adding emotional and personal depth that a formal questionnaire by its positivistic nature would hinder. My long term association with the market has proven to be an asset as it has provided a historical, personal context I would not have had otherwise. These vendors like myself have worked in these flea markets for a number of years and can offer insights into the

workings of these two markets from “the right spot” – an inside view – from a vendor’s perspective as well as share some of the concerns and attitudes expressed by the many shoppers they have dealt with over the years. Between these vendors including myself, we have had business dealings with thousands of shoppers in a variety of ways. Some have become regular customers; a more personal relationship generally develops; and others were limited to a general, informal acquaintance. There are conversations between vendors and customers throughout the business day; however, the topics of discussions were wide ranging.

Secondary materials include several years of researching markets and marketplaces. The literature of the field both economic and social has been reviewed. Several pertinent articles and ethnographic studies proved to be beneficial in adding to my own knowledge of markets.

In summary, this dissertation attempts to explore some of the issues of economic and social construction of flea markets. This will be done from an interactionist perspective using the flea market as a specific action site. As stated above, I will focus on two essential questions: 1) the role of the vendor and the attraction to working the market, and 2) the desirability of flea market shopping to a broad spectrum of shoppers. This dissertation will contribute to the field of economic sociology providing insights into how flea markets emerge as a stable market system and continues to flourish as part of the informal or secondary economy.

Chapter 2

Main Section – Theoretical framework: Urban marketplaces systems and mobile vendors: The Flea Market as commodity exchange site.

Although billions of dollars of retail exchanges take place in many large cities of the world, an increasing amount of buying and selling occurs at the cities margins in flea markets. The main theoretical question will focus on the immense popularity and all around success of the flea market phenomenon for vendors, shoppers, and suppliers. This part of the dissertation will describe the prototypical vendor who as a small business person goes into the flea market to make a living. To make a living has a variety of meanings to people, as the research will demonstrate. Secondly, the rationale for customers/shoppers to shop the flea markets will be discussed. Thirdly, the role of the manufacturer/supplier in the nexus of the underground cash economy will be analyzed to fully comprehend the flow of money and merchandise in the making of these two successful flea markets. The flea market has emerged as an action site (Goffman, 1959) and in fact has become an epistemic system. Therefore, one must not only research major participants in the flea market, their relationships and practices, and their nuances, but also analyze this specific marketplace in light of the limitations of neo-classical economic theory.

In neo-classical thought markets are seen as the natural order of things, as simply as simply a physical exchange of goods and services free of constraints and hindrances, (Becker; Belshaw; Block; Smith; et al.). Economic actors are seen by necessity to be narrow minded, self centered and self-seeking “calculating maximizers” in their outlook on economic activity (Williams; et al.). Their rationality is presented as one-dimensional, neutral and separate from society. Their preferences are static as if

involved in atomistic exchanges. By description flea markets as specific marketplaces are socially and economically constructed each with its own methods, constructs, and beliefs. These issues of social and economic components of flea markets make flea markets an exciting research site. It is premised on this idea of lived experiences. Discussions and close observations of vendors and shoppers and their actual practices, rather than mere introspections, will aid in defining and understanding these concepts, as the study will uncover something about their relationships.

Why would so many people want to become vendors in flea markets? Why would anyone? The days are long, the work I hard, and making a living is somewhat risky. What role does the market play in these entrepreneurs' personal and professional lives? "To study the flea market is to zero in on one institution which reflects a revival of entrepreneurial impulses at work in our society" (Maisel 1974, 489). To appreciate this revival, one must come to understand the occupational structure of this type of marketplace as an alternative economic system that has become institutionalized across America. One has an opportunity to make a living; to begin making a profit immediately. It is a great place to work, as it is favorable for playful behavior (Goffman, 1954) in a somewhat non-institutional structured environment, having informal forms of business arrangements (Fine and Kleinman, 1979; Fligstein, 1976; Hodgson, 1988; Sherry1987; Soiffer and Herrmann, 1984; Uzzi, 1996) and where there is a blurring of work and play. People who participate in flea markets are both economic and social actors. The term "amiable commerce," is used by Hirschman (1992) appropriately describing the flea market as having economic exchanges that are embedded in social ties of trust, friendliness, and sociability. These social,

psychological and environmental complexities of actual flea markets reveal the limitations and inaccuracies implicit within the neoclassical economic model. Doing business – participating, making a living or shopping in flea markets support a conception of human behavior that is “expressive, interpretive, and social, and grounded in behavioral practices; they illustrate a multi-level social reality that incorporates individual beliefs, communal meanings, and patterns of social interactions and reflects a specific time and physical location” (Smith 1981, 175). This describes an interactionist reality. Quoting Hirschman, “Clearly these tie- forming relationships effect on markets can be important only when there are that substantially departures from the ideal (neoclassical) model. But the fact is that lapses are exceeding frequent is important” (1982,1466). Flea markets provide a social space that accommodates novel forms of entrepreneurial activity. As research will show, decentralized solutions to making a living in the informal cash underground economy can come about by, “ a variety of individual motivations: self-interest, altruism, social norms or some combination thereof” (Tool, p.6). In short, markets are organized and institutionalized exchange sites” (Hodgson, p. 13). The flea market has come to epitomize the complex, fluid, non-institutional ways in which buyers and sellers are interrelate within society and economy. Participant observation, research, and discussions with flea market goers will help to elaborate the motivations for being part of the flea market and its part in peoples’ lives. By researching and using two markets for sources of information, a more realistic sociological theory may emerge delineating the different aspects, multiple roles and consequences, pervasiveness and durability of the informal economy

and the flea market's place within it, as it seeks to challenge the assumptions of the orthodox economic paradigm.

In a culture obsessed by consumption, the public has made shopping at flea markets part of a national pastime. In a time of luxurious and sophisticated malls, shopping on line, and credit card consumption, the flea market is a main shopping destination for many. A major group of focus in this study are the consumers who shop the "market", as it is known by many regulars. Shoppers at both flea market sites will be discussed and compared and contrasted as research seeks to uncover their motivations for shopping at these sites despite having such numerous choices to go elsewhere. In the heat, the cold and inclement weather, they enthusiastically participate en masse. Economic and social reasons are two primary motivating factors. Shopping for bargains, adventure, and fun top the list for huge crowds on market days. Shopping is more than economics/finance. Shopping says a lot about a person's relationship to others, their values, and their lifestyles. The "hunt" is on, "call it the ubiquitous middle-class American taste culture" (Goldberger 1997, 45). The flea markets have become a cultural phenomena as well as an economic emporium. Culturally, they provide the shoppers with diversion such as entertainment, outdoor leisure, reprieve from the private sphere which is frequently isolating, to an exciting public domain that provides the individual with a visual feast of a seemingly infinite variety of merchandise. This unconventional shopping opportunity is a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon – shopping for bargains without paying taxes and having unlimited choices. It has become virtually a one-stop, "must shop" for many consumers and has become a shopping mecca at the heart of consumer culture. The flea market is a public space – an

environment that uplifts many people tending to keep them there longer and making it easier to part with their money. “One of the attractions to buyers and sellers alike is the market anonymity and absence of third party interference” (Maisel 1974, 489). Contact is real, direct and personal in many cases. The opportunities are there.

Flea markets offer “counterculture breeziness” (Goldberger 1997, 47) where the individual is really left alone to bargain, negotiate, and haggle fairly. Vendors come to make money and shoppers to save money. Suppliers/manufacturers that choose to be involved in flea market activity in the cash underground or secondary economy frequently work off the books. They sell or unload merchandise that is frequently surplus, get cash for it and sometimes write it off as a lose for tax purposes.

This marketplace has been overlooked for some time by economists and sociologists alike. It has been considered by some anthropologists as pre-modern, or as a traditional market site that survives on the fringes of modern society (Cross 1998, 1). This dissertation will explore the multifaceted issues of three main economic players involved in flea markets: vendor, shopper, and supplier/manufacturer.

Lastly, my primary concern is conducting an ethnographic study of two flea markets. My own research has made me more aware than ever before of the social context in which these markets operate. I seek to explore the socio-cultural sphere that economics operates within the context of these two flea markets. Therefore, issues of embeddedness, rationality (with an understanding of utility maximization), and the determination of value and price will be considered from a neo-classical perspective, and its appropriateness or the lack thereof in the prediction, description, and comprehension of the flea market phenomena. Included is a chapter concerning the

process of determining value and price. A major success of flea markets is their ability in coordinating determinations of value and price of an extraordinary variety of goods and services.

In the book, Traditional Exchanges and Modern Markets, Belshaw states:

“The impersonality of the market place is an element in economic and sociological theory which requires much modification. Here there has been some confusion because impersonality in exchange relations has tended to be equated with rationality and the pursuit of profit maximization. To be rational (in the economists’ sense) and to pursue profit one must ideally put aside all other extraneous considerations of an emotive character which create bonds of social relations which might work against the profit motive” (79).

It is precisely the existence of personal bonds that help make the flea market so successful and vibrant. It is the interplay and mutual influences between economy and society that this dissertation will engage. Therefore, the variables mentioned above play a central role in understanding how flea markets actually work – as an integrated economy with its own specificities (Becker, 1976; Belshaw, 1965; Geertz, 1973; Smelser, 1976; Smith, 1989; Tool, 1986; Williamson, 1975; Uzzi, 1996). In fact, there are nexuses of relationships of various economic actors, the community, and culture that are dialectically interconnected with the economy and society in the broadest sense of human engagement (Block, 1990). The flea market by definition has solidarity generating mechanisms that lie at the heart of its success (contractual assignment between vendors and owners, saving vendor spots/stalls, distribution of tables, relational trust that develops between people), (Durkheim, 1964; Morales, 1991). There are a variety of social and economic forms that bind self with others for vendors, shoppers and suppliers/manufacturers. There is also an object centered sociality (Cetina, 1992; Miller, 1998; Shor and Holt, 2000).

Consumption and the identity of self-definition to commodities, name brands and exchange relationships play a major factor in Americans' mass culture and consumer society. Flea markets and their place in the informal economy provide an exchange site allowing for a variety of interpersonal relatedness through both social and consumer oriented objects. The dissertation will address the factors that go into the dynamics of these determinations and explore the marvelous world of these two flea markets.

Chapter 3

The Concept of Embeddedness – Location of Market Sites as a Source of Internal Organization

“There is no capitalism without local articulation,” (Hefner 1998, 29). Implicit within that concept is the idea and construct of embeddedness—the process by which social relations shape economic action. Location, history, and culture have an impact on the development of these two flea markets. “All forms of economic interaction are centered in social relations and in fact the economy is rife with social connections” (Granovetter 1985, 495). This chapter concerns itself with how economic action is embedded in structures of social relations. Embeddedness refers to the process by which social relations shape economic action. What are the social arrangements that help create the uniqueness of each of these two marketplaces? Variables such as local history, local values, available resources, capital formation schemes, social relations involved in doing business, and in creating stability, must be assessed in order to further understand the working of the markets being researched. I have observed and uncovered in my research a plurality of social relations that helped to structure these two local markets. A sophisticated analysis of economic action must take embeddedness into consideration “purposeful economic action is embedded in concrete, on going systems of social relations” (Ibid. 487).

Location is a substantial variable in attempting to understand the development and success of marketplaces. Marketplace systems are highly influenced by their surrounding communities in which they are situated or embedded – its history, values, and rituals of shopping and way of conduction business. I have thought of

this phenomenon as ‘social economics’. To understand the economic and collective forms of these two flea markets specifically, one must attempt to answer the question how these markets developed and flourished on parking lots of racetracks designed to race thoroughbred racehorses. The location of these two flea market sites specifically and flea markets generally, and their embeddedness in the surrounding community has fostered an immense growth in the development of the informal economy in Queens and Long Island, New York. Both flea markets are located on sites that were originally open spaces bought by private investors, and though planned for one purpose, now have a multifunctional use which has provided an array of opportunities.

Comment [LA1]: data

“Embeddedness is an exchange system with unique opportunities relative to markets and that those that are organized in social networks have a higher survival rate than those with arms length relationships”(Uzzi, p. 674). These opportunities – in this case the development of private/public space – open space and its derivative use are directly and concretely embedded in economic, legal, political, and social structures. In fact, in order to understand the history and transformation of these open spaces for multi-purpose use, one must take into account the social and economic arrangements at work. One must actually pay attention to concrete actors who mobilize resources through networks of social relations. These networks or arrangements set the way by which business deals are made. They are not static but are ongoing, continuously being constructed (and reconstructed) depending on social relationships such as capital formation, and market necessities at the time. These realities not only shape the people involved, they are in fact shaped by these

economic actors. Their individual identity, strategic rationale, and doing business together, produce a specific and unique outcome. This business reality is itself embedded in a broader system of relations to society and community, and culture. It is not how the development, the outcome, had to be that way - one mechanical competitive, Hobbesian paradigmatic scheme. It was socially constructed within market realities that vast open space parking lots at these two racetracks would now become the basis for these two huge, immensely successful flea markets. The success of these flea market exchange site lies in the fact that human society is interwoven within the economy and the involvement is multifaceted (Becker, 1976; Belshaw, 1965; Grenovetter, 1985; Polanyi, 1944; Smelser, 1976; Tool, 1986; Uzzi, 1996). Each of these two markets has their own specifics.

There is a history of social and economic arrangements at work in the development and construction of race- tracks and multipurpose use of these open spaces in these two areas. The details are somewhat dissimilar; however, the parallels are enlightening. Both flea markets use the immense parking facilities at the tracks to setup their rows of vendor spots. Both markets are centrally located in their respective counties surrounded by major parkways accessible by car, bus and in the case of Aqueduct Raceway Flea Market, subway, Long Island Rail Road, and even an airport – Kennedy International – giving Aqueduct Flea Market and its surrounding community – Queens – a kaleidoscope of ethnicity that is international in scope. The *Queens Tribune* – March 22 – states in the editorial section that, “Queens, the most ethnically diverse county in the United States, is the largest of the five boroughs that make up New York City,” (1998, 12), and Aqueduct Raceway

Flea Market is centrally located among a wide variety of distinct neighborhoods.

“The influx of the immigrants to the area, once primarily populated by Whites and African American brought with it a vast reservoir of immigrant ambition, desire, hope, entrepreneurship skill and novel culture” (Ibid., p.12). The main attraction to Southeast Queens are its schools and houses, diverse neighborhoods, shopping – a main attraction also is the commercial strip on Jamaica Avenue and Liberty Avenue, and other amenities such as mass transit.

Aqueduct Racetrack at Rockaway Boulevard off from Belt Parkway, in Ozone Park, opened on September 27, 1848, and was started by four businessmen who were dedicated fans of horseracing. Farmland originally, it was bought with the intention of constructing a lavish facility dedicated to racing thoroughbred horses.

Government and private funds were used to set up a non-profit race track to benefit the racing community and the state through tax revenue. According to *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, “In 1959, the New York State Racing Association spent \$33 million to renovate the track, which now has a capacity of 80,000. Thirty minutes from Times Square in Manhattan by express subway, it became the leading betting track in the United States” (489). Yet, “obsolescence has come quickly to Aqueduct, the wonder track of 1959 is the dinosaur of 1994. High cost of operation, declining attendance due to weather conditions in the winter specially, other forms of entertainment such as off-track betting at Atlantic City, Lotto, and opening of gambling at Atlantic City, caused the lose of profits.”¹

During this time, a small company – Barterama of Elmont, Long Island, right on the borderline of Queens and Long island, which booked small outdoor shows,

circuses, fairs, antique shows, bazaars for charity benefits, etc., approached the officials at the racetrack with a plan to open a flea market on their premises. What could be better? The huge parking lots and open spaces were available, the location was ideal and the flea market could operate on non-racing days. Aqueduct Raceway Flea Market opened for business in 1974. Soon afterward, there were 2000 vendors renting 12' by 25' spaces from which to sell their wares, for \$20.00 per day. It is estimated that, "60,000 shoppers showed on a single day."²

How did it work? Vendors had a choice of purchasing daily, weekly or monthly tickets. These tickets ensured each vendor security for working, predictability of a particular location, and immediate income. Location is paramount as vendors sought to have a stall in an aisle with the most customer traffic – near the entrances, near the food concession stands, or near where the shoppers parked their cars. A corner spot was considered a prime location as it was noticeable to a larger volume of shoppers. (Truth be told, business was great anywhere in the market.) The market was open Tuesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. It opened its gates for the vendors at 7:30 in the morning to allow the setting up of merchandise, about an hour and a half before the public was allowed in. Just about anything that could be hauled in a van, the most popular vehicle used by vendors, or in a car inside and on top, was taken and sold at these spots. Most had their own set-up equipment – tables, racks, stands of all sorts, display cabinets, and accessories such as awnings, signs, and a variety of small tools to facilitate the process. For those not having their own tables or who do not feel like carrying them around, one may rent them for \$10.00/day or (by the month) to about 100 vendors oft of more than 1200. After a while, most had their own tables.

Business tended to be somewhat leisurely in the early morning hours as the gates were open for the customers at approximately 9:00AM., and gradually built to a fever of activity late morning. This intensity of buying and selling frequently went on to approximately five o'clock in the afternoon, at which time many vendors began to breakdown their spots, and started loading their merchandise. Those merchants who worked with family members, friends or hired helpers, continued selling as others packed. Buying and selling were frequently intense at this time. Shoppers were looking for truly rock bottom bargain prices knowing that some vendors did not really want to have to reload the same merchandise and take it home. Cash was 'king' as many deals were negotiated, much money was made, and there were quite a few very satisfied and happy customers going home after a very successful day shopping at the flea market. Many vendors take inventory as they pack, go home, and re-stock their vehicles with merchandise for the next market day.

My observation over the years of being a vendor was that this particular time in the flea market – late afternoon – portrayed much that was special for most people – shoppers and vendors – about the flea market experience. Shoppers expressed feelings of gratification, contentment, and enjoyment. One could sense fulfillment and emotional and economic satisfaction within themselves. They seemed satiated as they had become, “absorbed in the ritual of seeking and comparing, of imagining and envisioning merchandise in use.” Paco Underhill in his book, Why We Buy-The Source of Shopping, goes on to state:

“Those who plumb the metaphysics of shopping – they illuminate how we human beings go through life searching, examining, question, and then acquiring and

assuming and absorbing the best of what we see. Shopping is a transforming experience, a method of becoming a newer, perhaps even slightly improved person. The products you buy turn you into that other, idealized version of yourself: that dress makes you look beautiful, this lipstick makes you kissable, that lamp turns your house into an elegant showplace” (116.)

The flea markets provides, allows for, this type of intoxicating shopping environment – this type of “joint construction whereby each side monitors reactions of the other through a schedule of terms of trade” (White 1981, 517). This co-construction between vendor and shopper is exemplified in bargaining which is widespread during the late-in-the-day period of time. Bargaining serves an economic purpose in attempting to reassess value and price: the vendors’ need to make a living, and the shoppers’ need to get the best possible price for the article. There is a sense of economic and social empowerment as vendor and shopper engage each other on economic/money issues; yet sensitive to each other as human beings - one trying to make a living and the other attempting to satisfy a human need. A social (human) character of consumption prevailed in many instances - maximum contact between seller, consumer and commodity. “This eternal encounter between seller and buyer, and each with an opposing view of economic self-interest, has a semi-formal dimension of convention. Considered as a communications channel, bargaining consists of a system of conventionalized signals designed to reveal which of these situations one may obtain – agreement or consensus, hesitation or possible settlement, or unlikely to exchange” (C. Geertz, M. Geertz, L. Rosen 1979, 226). Within this framework is a social process of bargaining or haggling, which is itself

embedded in culture, customs and values. There is a bargaining etiquette, enumerated through a social process of contestation and concern for other – a degree of cooperation to get the best deal for oneself.

It becomes self evident and in a sense, self fulfilling, that there is a tremendous sense of satisfaction and success at the end of the day for many vendors and shoppers. The individuals that work and shop in this environment frequently have a sense of elation at the end of the day. I have experienced this myself on many occasions and personally have met many shoppers that have had similar feelings. After many inquiries, it can be said that both vendors and shoppers feel more in control of their economic circumstances – the vendors their own boss making decisions concerning sales, value, and price; the shoppers getting good deals on their purchases. In the flea market, they feel that they have mastery over much of their own fate, feel successful in their own eyes, and profitable on their own terms.

The terms by which these interactions take place manifest themselves as feelings of satisfaction. Financially and psychically, they are to be understood not only on the basis of financial arrangements, but community values of what is worth having, trust in the market itself, and what it represents, and shared concepts of value and exchange. These realities are further enmeshed and influenced by marketplace location (cf. Cetina, 1977; Chin, 2001; Fiske, 1989; Geertz, 1963, 1973; Hefner, 1998; Rivlin, 1986; Sherry, 1990; Smith, 1989; Underhill, 1999). Aqueduct Raceway Flea Markets is international in scope. The diversity of Queens, the nearness to Kennedy International Airport, brings people to shop and to be vendors from many parts of the world. Its concepts of beauty, fashions, doing business,

shopping, and haggling over price is somewhat different from the suburban upper-middle class outlook.

To understand the intricacies of Roosevelt Raceway Flea Market, one must have an appreciation of the history of its land use in suburbia. “Economic worlds are social worlds,” Granovetter states, “the key to understanding ‘market building’ is to understand how markets develop in their location and society” (486). “Rather than get gobbled up by the growing urban giant to the West, several towns around Hempstead choose to band together exactly one century ago to form the new County of Nassau. In doing so, they created a model of suburban development for the rest of the country” (Teaford 1999, A20). Roosevelt Raceway, dominating the Hempstead Plain, is on land that was formally Indian hunting grounds. “The Dutch were enthusiastic race-goers and in 1665, built the new world’s first horse race track that was measured in distance. Roosevelt Raceway and its neighbors were occupied during the Revolutionary War by British Troops, and it was used as a training ground for Union Troops during the Civil War. The land adjacent to it was converted into a private airstrip following World War I. Charles Lindberg in his ‘Spirit of St. Louis’ departed from the field on May 19, 1927. With the encroachment of civilization, agricultural, industrial, and business endeavors gradually developed, and twenty-five years later, harness racing was introduced into the New York area” (Ford 1964, 6-7).

This land area is of historic importance, (from the beginning of America, Indians, the Dutch, the English, several wars, coal burning trains, aviation, shopping center sprawl, a community college, a university, a major coliseum, county owned park, golf course), steeped in tradition and old money, sport and leisure, status and

ideology. “That continuing sense of being outside the city and offering a better alternative to the city has defined much of Nassau’s history. This same sense of being beyond the city and thankful for being beyond the city has defined the suburban mentality throughout the United States in the 20th century. By living in Nassau, one could partake of Manhattan but one could also escape it. Nassau was the suburban dream, supposedly embodying the best of both the city and the country.”³ Shopping for brand name items, at one’s leisure, has become the norm. According to Chin, “shoppers are not anonymous historyless individuals when shopping. In the confrontation between historically situated people and socially constructed space, people are reconstructed as particular people in that space” (p. 114). The nearness of the ‘gold coast’ of the north shore of Long Island has affected the ideology of consumption, and therefore of selling.

Roosevelt Field Shopping Mall is “one of the busiest shopping hubs in the Northeast. Roosevelt Field area is one of the most diversified five square mile area as can be found anywhere in America...we have a large covered shopping mall with over 100 fine stores; office buildings on virtually every plot of land; a modern harness racing track; warehouses; a community college and a university nearby; a major coliseum; and exhibition center; a county owned park and a golf course.”⁴ This area has been advertised and described in terms of ultra modern retail, as having progressive, prestigious shopping and entertaining, excitement and having all possibilities available to customers. The Roosevelt Raceway Flea Market is a mile and a half or so from all of this. While accessibility is a key to the area’s success, the enormous variety of merchandise available, free parking for 12,000 cars at the mall

and 10,000 cars at the flea market, all help to attract more than “350,000 people a week and tens of thousands at the flea market, and 90 percent are in cars, bring more people to shop” (Sen 1981, 1-2). That universal symbol of suburbia, the automobile, is the machine that keeps Roosevelt Field and Roosevelt Raceway and flea market going.

In fact, “the flea market generates millions of dollars for the local and state governments, employs 1200 vendors, and is open two days a week – Wednesday and Sunday – generating income for local businesses, restaurants, gas stations, even Roosevelt Field Mall”(Ibid., p.2). It is a major pivotal part of Nassau County. The flea market, which is located in the parking lot of 172 acres of the raceway, has prospered since its opening in 1974. The history, its location, and its proximity to Roosevelt Field Shopping Mall has helped make this flea market, which was started and leased by a former antique dealer, one of the largest in the United States.

The main gates to Roosevelt Raceway Flea Market are opened for vendors at 6:30 AM. sharp, and one may enter at the south gate off the Meadowbrook Parkway, then go east for approximately ½ a mile. The other gate is on the east side of the raceway and one may enter by the side streets between Old Country Road and Hempstead Turnpike, which are themselves major boulevards going in a east/west direction leading to the surrounding towns, shopping centers, and other major attractions such as the Nassau Coliseum. Some vendors choose to come this early, setup, and then have breakfast and socialize with fellow vendors. A lot depends of the sophistication of the setup; obviously, through experience and habit, vendors usually arrive in a time frame appropriate for themselves. Most came at around 8:00AM, knowing they

have an hour to setup before the customers arrive, as the gates open promptly for customers at 9:00AM sharp. As at Aqueduct, there is a \$2.00 fee for each car no matter how many people are in it. Vendors over the years estimated on average there would be three occupants per car and about 10,000 cars is one day. There are usually long lines of cars by 8:45AM. These people come to shop. Over the years, it has been an amazingly busy place. Business was frequently brisk even at this early hour. 'Walk-ins' are fifty cents, but on Long Island where the automobile is almost a basic requirement for living, this line was a short one.

Most vendors had steady or monthly tickets to ensure their spaces or spots. Allocation of spots was done in a variety of ways: primarily a vendor would go into the main office during the week and purchase a monthly ticket. Weekly or a per day basis was also available. The method used by a minority of vendors who were not regulars either by choice or because there were no permanent spots available at the time. They frequently had a store and came to the flea market to sell merchandise that did not sell in their store. The flea market was used simply as an alternative outlet. They came on a particular day and would have to stand-by to see what spots were not in use on that day. An attempt was made not to put two vendors selling the same items near each other. Later on when the market became very successful, in many cases paying the owner or his assistant money under the table was necessary to secure a space. Though illegal, for obvious reasons few would run to the district attorney's office. You would not work in the flea market and how could you prove it? Knowing one of the owners of the land or racetrack and having that person make a call for you or a particular vendor, would frequently assure one a spot. Since there

wasn't a concrete embedded legalized institutionalization of spot allocation, (there was 'a so called list' to satisfy the district attorney's office), spots could cost up to one thousand dollars for a pay-off-a day's receipt for many vendors. In the *Working Series* of the American Bar Foundation, "Institutionalizing Informal Economic Resources: The Case of Property in Chicago's Maxwell Street Market," Alfonso Morales attempts to define the degree of embeddedness in the allocation of vendor stalls/spots, (these terms are interchangeable), at this particular flea market. He states: "I am not arguing for one institutional form, rather, different combinations of the relevant organizing principles results in different degrees of institutionalization. A formalized flea market firm would employ an accountant, guarantee its products and keep records. On the other hand, at times, there is an alternative regulatory structure that evolves which includes, the favor, networks of alliances of friends, relatives, neighbors, and powerful well-connected patrons, combining cultural and economic ways to allocate space."⁵ Being a steady vendor with a monthly ticket, allows for economic expectations and predictability of a regular stall/spot to do business. This increases organization, stability and cooperation between vendors. Informal cooperative networks develop between vendors and a feeling of getting along prevails. Frequently, a sense of reciprocity emerges as the realization seeps in that as vendors, we might need one another to watch our spot while going to the bathroom, or to renew a ticket, or perhaps need a helping hand with merchandise, or someone to talk with if business slows down, or if it was a good day, or to share information about the weather conditions or business activity or arrangements. All

of this social interaction helps make the working day more pleasant, better organized, and in fact, more economically viable.

This market is unique in that it has a major indoor arena, a huge edifice that is actually part of the horse racing stadium. Only about 25% of the vendors have both an out door spot and an indoor spot in case of inclement weather. Depending on weather conditions, strategies for setting up vary – rain, obviously indoors; yet what about weather that is threatening? Many (we included) have a two spot set up strategy. One must set up two spots and go back and forth depending on the weather. This is a lot of additional work setting up a second spot, and having to move merchandise back and forth; therefore, many vendors stand around talking as long as possible trying to figure out what to do, until just before 9:00AM opening for customers—the start of the business day. Last minute set ups are frequent during poor weather. Since more money can be made in nice weather, everyone is always hoping for the best. This is a major risk for vendors – weather conditions.

Business hours of 9-5 tend to be more rigidly enforced at Roosevelt Flea market as compared to Aqueduct Flea Market. It seems a difference in management style. A more down-home relaxed, flexible attitude is at Aqueduct; while there tends to be an arrogance, almost elitist entourage at Roosevelt. Though much of the working day is similar at each flea market, a major difference is in some of the merchandise being displayed and sold. A distinctive characteristic of Roosevelt Flea Market is the selling and emphasis of recognizable brand names, upper-end merchandise, status laden items that are ‘must haves’ for shoppers and therefore need to be an essential part of vendors’ inventory and major display. One must quickly learn this if one is to

be successful at this marketplace. Status as a value is embedded in the history, tradition, and wealth of the area – Roosevelt Field Shopping Mall – Roosevelt (Raceway) Flea Market offer both consumptive opportunities for shoppers that are status sensitive combined with a leisure atmosphere, real and imaginary. This flea market, as a specific market place, is a location to be seen at and to talk about. Style, trademarks, and locale, “tend to become virtues and command the difference of the community. Conspicuous consumption of valuable goods is a means of reputability” (Veblen 1889, 71). Conspicuous buying, consuming beyond one’s means, and an air of distinction, (delineated from the other lower class flea markets), reeks with a feeling of superiority, necessity, and a penchant for showing one’s ability to pay. Gossip and envy secure the reputation of the Roosevelt mystique of the rich and not so rich, by shopping the particular marketplace. One must have a car and the ability to pay to fully shop this market. This attitude is a dominant theme at Roosevelt Flea Market that is not a concern at Aqueduct Flea Market where middle class, and working poor, and poor have come to shop. The social identity here comes from a gradual expansion of a sense of what ordinary consumers may expect in order to maintain and enhance their standard of living. It is their main shopping/consumption site to help counteract the myriad petty economic tyrannies of everyday life.

Furthermore, Roosevelt Raceway Flea Market, being so near to Roosevelt Field Mall, provided occasion for shoppers to check the merchandise there; then go back to the flea market at a later time looking for the latest styles – in clothes usually – at flea market prices. They would also avoid paying taxes. Shoppers here sacrifice time, energy, automobile wear and cost of gasoline to acquire merchandise, even a

single item, even if they do not really need it especially if it is identified as a fashionable brand name. They wanted many of these items at unrealistic prices in today's market. The reputability of an item takes on an additional importance and value to the commodity itself and becomes even more desirable to the customer. Status as a value is being exchanged here.

This was a major factor actually lead to the denouement of Roosevelt Raceway Flea Market as a viable market site. Customers began demanding high quality items at an unrealistic price; therefore, some vendors to stay in business and to satisfy the customers' wishes, starting selling seconds or slightly irregular garments as well as copy-cats or knock-offs of originals, disingenuously as first quality merchandise. Fraudulent behavior was widespread among many vendors to some degree just to survive. Conflicts erupted between some of these vendors and a few of their customers as returns on merchandise become more frequent. Several less scrupulous vendors began changing their spot as often as possible to make it more difficult for dissatisfied customers to find them. By far, the majority of honest vendors became disheartened by this phenomena.

Other aspects of the decline of Roosevelt Raceway Flea Market and the Raceway of which it was a part, was similar to the decline of raceways generally – cultural changes – other forms of gambling, the lottery, Atlantic City, off-track betting, political malfeasance, real estate scandal, and changes in the tax structure, all lead to the closing of Roosevelt Race Track, on 7/15/88, which happens to be situated on, “Nassau County's last large underdeveloped tract of industrial property” (Hadrick 1988, A33). In short, the owners of the race track and surrounding

property, wanted to make a 'killing' in real estate by closing the race track and flea market, and, "selling the land by lots to the highest corporate, industrial, commercial firms for approximately 150 – 200 million dollars" (Ibid., p.A3). This amount is by far much more than all the revenue from horse racing or marketing. Thousands of people lost their jobs – both vendors and race track personnel.

Though there has been a decline in race track attendance, Aqueduct Race Track and Flea Market has remained open, while Roosevelt Race Track and Roosevelt Flea Market have been closed. Many believe that the lack of political leadership, greed, and unethical behavior, have lead to the demise of these two "action scenes" – a race track and flea market. A lot of people will miss "the action" - the entertainment, and the shopping, and the fun, these two institutions provided.

Chapter 4

Informal Retailing – Vendors in Flea Market Settings

Why would so many people want to become vendors in flea markets? Why would anyone? The days are long, the work is hard, and making a living is somewhat risky. What role does the market play in these entrepreneurs' personal and professional life? "To study the flea market is to zero in on one institution which reflects a revival of entrepreneurial impulses at work in our society" (Maisel 1974, 489). To appreciate this revival, one must come to understand the occupational structure of this type of market place as an alternative economic system that has become institutionalized with varying degrees across America. At a time of economic uncertainty, here economic opportunity abounds. One has an opportunity to make a living; to begin making a profit immediately. A minimal amount of start-up seed money is necessary as there is very low overhead, little paper work, few requirements, and one may become one's boss from the start. The rewards offered by this informal economy goes beyond the financial. An examination of the informal economy at flea markets demonstrates certain domains that are somewhat different from that of the large-scale national arena, the primary economy where most conventional economic activity is assumed to take place. There is a degree of vagueness concerning the boundaries separating the personal and intimate spheres of family and community from the conventional economic sphere. "Depending on the type of social milieu, informal economic activities will employ different modalities of exchange, each with different motivations and different expectations of return. These modalities will reflect the nature of the personal ties between participants,

defined by norms and institutions that are in essence, non-economic” (J. Gaughan and Louis Ferman (1987, 16). Informal networks continue to serve a variety of functions, both within the world of the working flea market and outside of it. Unlike many traditional jobs – 9-5, assembly line routine activities, dominated by work, entrepreneurial settings such as flea markets offer those who choose to sell in them the opportunity to integrate creatively their personal and professional lives. The independent nature of being a vendor in the flea markets is that in this informal setting the market provides a flexible arena in which they can bring their personal/professional selves and build significant social relationships. Thus, social and creative as well as financial aspects of flea market activity play an important role for the participants and the culture of the market as a whole. The integration of interests, feelings, needs, and passions enriches their lives and business dealings. It helps makes working and shopping at these markets more exciting. Social relationships built on shared professional interests and concerns extend easily beyond the work setting, potentially constructing over time a sense of solidarity - family and community. There exists a drama of personal identities that is predominant among these vendor/entrepreneurs. Hearty as these individuals are, there is a construction of commonalities as these economic actors try to construct their day in allotted spaces – where they must park their vehicle, unload their wares, their racks, and set ups, while providing security by being aware of their spots and the surrounding area. This includes the spots or stalls next to them, and therefore communication and cooperation and a sense of reciprocity of camaraderie between neighboring vendors begins to develop early and becomes essential in conducting

business activity. These social transactions among vendors themselves further develops toward customers and throughout the day manifests in a variety of ways to facilitate innumerable small exchanges that incorporate working and selling the flea market. Furthermore, it is a great place to work as it is favorable for playful behavior (Goffman, 1967) in a less than formal institutionally structured environment by having predominate informal forms of business arrangements (Geertz, 1963), whereby participants in the flea market may confront each other as strangers; yet immediately bound by norms, informal rules and in some cases, social ties. There is the allure of adventure to be where the action is, as the ambition to get ahead and personal satisfaction finds its way into the novel forms of entrepreneurial activity found in flea markets. The potential to develop one's business is virtually unlimited. The hours are flexible; there is free time on non-market days, allowing one the privilege to pursue business or personal activities.

There are vendors who have chosen to do this line of work full-time, even expanding their enterprise to include opening a store that operates in conjunction with working several flea markets, as one now acquires more space for merchandise and is then able to bring many more items to bear upon existing circumstances. What doesn't sell in the store, one may bring to the flea market or vice versa. Stores usually have more space for the storage of inventory. One may become increasingly flexible in business dealings and maneuver in the flow of commodities by buying right-perhaps in bulk, thus lowering prices for the shoppers. Furthermore, with the availability of extra storage space, one has the capacity to buy an available commodity at an exceptional price from a manufacturer looking for an immediate

sale that can be sold at a latter date for a low price. Also, one can take advantage of manufacturers' discounts, odd lots, and surpluses of all types-deals made of a variety of merchandise for any number of reasons. Having the ability and contacts to buy right and then to sell at a low price is a key to successful vending at the flea market. Winter coats, for example, may be available in the off-season as manufactures make room for their stock, or they may re-organize, or move the manufacturing to another location. As new items become available, the vendor who has space for inventory and additional stock increases potential to be very successful. This group tends to be very energetic and equates motivation with successful rewards that are directly and immediately linked. This sphere of increased entrepreneurial ship, organization, and commercial associations forms a nexus consisting of money, frequently cash (it is untraceable and therefore difficult to tax, and it opens many doors to the best merchandise in Manhattan as well as increasing actual in come for all).

Manufactures, vendors, commodities, and customers are all involved in the circulation of money, value, determinations of price and merchandise form all over the world, and, of course, infinitude of sales. What a business! It provides satisfaction of economic well-being and flexibility in one's life. Cash is an abstraction according to Simmel, and "the clearest embodiment of the formula of all being; according to which things receive their meaning through mutual relations."⁶

Money in the form of cash allows and enhances the workings of flea markets; so does owning and using a van in one's operation. Driven by most vendors as their primary mode of transportation, it serves a variety of functions. One is able to drive to Manhattan, for example, and load the van to its full capacity directly from the

manufacturer. This is often by a back door or an unused hallway to maintain a degree of privacy and security. Money is being exchanged and merchandise is being loaded into a van that is considered to be part of an informal exchange in the underground or informal market economy without government regulation, proper bookkeeping, or proper reporting. In other words, these exchanges are frequently off-the books; few if any records are kept; and the manufacturer can claim it off income tax-as a business deduction or claim lose of merchandise. Use of a van and use of cash make this all possible. Vans provide utility in transportation, storage, loading and unloading that a car has little capacity. This method of operations proves very successful as it, “encourages commodity flows and changes the commodity context” (Appadurai 1986, 15) from a manufacturer in the primary economy to an alternative market, to a retail store, from wholesale to retail, and from one market to another. As commodities are transported from one domain to the next, there is vagueness of the boundaries separating the personal and intimate spheres of family and community from the conventional to the informal economic sphere. “Depending on the type of social milieu, informal economic activities will employ different modalities of exchange, each with different motivations and different expectations of return”(Gaughan and Ferman 1987, 16). In case of inclement weather at the flea market, assured income is still generated from a store where other family members may work. The boundaries are not always clearly demarcated as in the primary economy; yet through determination of the entrepreneurial spirit, this has become a very successful set up for some full time devoted professional vendors.

Having a full time career in the mainstream economy and participating in the flea market business to supplement income is another type of vendor. I personally know of several teachers of secondary education. Two are in this study. One is an art teacher who along with his wife sells art supplies. The flea market has become an extension of their identity as 'artsy,' sociable, intellectual types, who are in business selling commodities (art supplies) that are used in two different settings. One is at work teaching, the other is at the flea market selling. The flea market has provided for him an economic outlet whereby his knowledge at his primary occupation allows him (and others) to enhance his earnings potential at an entirely different location, with different circumstances that involve commodity exchanges. For him, Sunday in the market is strictly to supplement a lifestyle of an expensive car and luxury vacations. The other teacher is the sports director at a nearby high school. He and his wife work the market selling sports wear. Some of the merchandise is the latest fashion; other items are slightly irregulars. Both sell well as prices are set modestly for a wide variety of sports enthusiastic customers. Socially they spend time together, have made money while being in adjacent stalls, (lending itself to positive re-enforcement of both being successful and thus enhancing their social activity) and have made friends of other vendors. Afterward, they frequently all go out to a restaurant or a movie.

Thirdly, there is another type of vendor that may be defined as semi-professional. This type of is serious about the market, but has other goals, aims and ambitions in life. The flea market affords profits, flexible working hours and plenty of time to pursue other more essential interests in his or her life. Young entrepreneurs such as

students would fall into this category; so would other people that have as a vocation their prime source of self -identity (cf. Weber, Tax). These individuals usually seek alternative lifestyles from the corporate framework with its ridged structure. Being a vendor in the flea market scene provides an economic basis for varied lifestyle. For some, this business in flea markets helps supplement and / or supports other freelance enterprises which have not or no longer provide sufficient income, such as a struggling jazz musician who worked near the main entrance selling both used and new musical instruments, while playing tapes and adding color or character to the flea market. Many customers and vendors knew of this individual and some even dropped change into his cup. Two people were aspiring writers on their first book. The flea market has allowed them to survive as they pursue their dreams. In a postindustrial economy, struggling Ph.D. candidates as myself, and others in similar circumstances, supplement and stretch the dollar using the informal economy to help overcome insecure and inadequate economic situations.

Full-time collectors play a less prominent role at both these two flea markets, though there were a few experienced jewelry vendors who realized many people were looking for a bargain; and so therefore, had only a few expensive pieces to show. Most were cheap or middle range items that sold very well. More prevalent were the seasonal hobbyists who specialized in a particular venue – exotic dolls, or holiday gift novelties, flower arrangements, tie dye shirts and candles, and use the market as an outlet exploiting their craft making ability. Antiques and bric-a-brac were too often seen as old, seedy, second-hand, and less desirable in these two flea markets trying to project themselves as new, upscale, hip, and modern. Across all

groups, there is a blending of work and play, personal interest and hobby, business and casual ambience with no formal dress code and seemingly few restrictions. An additional benefit of working in the flea market is the fact that as opportunity increases, so does personal self-expression both in and out of the market. There is a desire for vendors to creatively construct their own time frames for themselves rather than fit into a standard working class routine where one's personal time is controlled to a large degree by external circumstances. A full time jewelry vendor, and my neighbor in the market, cherishes being able to, "do what I want, when I want, with no one telling me what to do; being able to go at my own pace, spending three months in sunny Florida while it's winter in New York is what it's all about." He re-supplies his stock after the winter holiday shopping, loads his van, and he and his wife spend the winter in Florida working the flea markets two or three days a week. The rest of the time, they vacation. Another vendor I came to know became an avid bicyclist, and working as a vendor selling racing bikes and parts affords him the opportunity, time and money to pursue his passion. There was a vendor who sold furs. He and his wife would drive to Mexico, vacation, and afterward, load their van full of furs bought with the cash they made in the flea market. The price was outrageously low compared with furs bought in the United States. He and his wife not only got to travel, vacation, but sold a matchless article at the flea market at unequalled quality and price. They never sold in a store. With this routine, they made sufficient money to allow themselves three months off – January, February, and March – the slowest time of the year in retail sales.

Overall, some expressed a feeling that the people in the flea market do not stress conventional business settings. Yet still there is a sense of intoxication and excitement people like my father had, pitting his wits against the market-large and small-to see how one fares. In the absence of formality in the flea market, there is a rambling of activity in buying and selling commodities, a mischievousness, in wheeling and dealing, and at times, fun. It certainly is less haute couture than the fashionable world centers of Manhattan, of which my father and mother and I were a small part; yet, it was exciting. Many times, I fitted these business encounters with my schedule at City University-The Graduate Center. It was a terrific time in my life.

Within the context of flea markets, “most importantly, there is an agonistic, romantic, individualistic, and games like ethos that stands in contrast in to the ethos of everyday economic behavior” (Appadurai 1986, 50), and this social aspect is a major characteristic within economic behavior at flea markets. It is in this environment that vendors (as well as customers) have the ability to operate at once within the broad spectrum in the business world of the informal economy where at these two market places where there is a predominance of jovial interaction – openly personal, to the comical. It is a major component for the phenomenal success of flea markets. Flea markets are magnificent for those vendors who have an entrepreneurial spirit and an adventurous nature. It allows them to construct their personal and professional lives on a more independent basis.

Chapter 5

Customer Rationale for Shopping the Market

Who are the people coming to the flea market in such large numbers? Why would they want to shop there and spend so much time and money, rather than go to numerous shopping malls, department stores, or a variety of other discount specialty shops? What are they searching for, and what could they possibly hope to find?

Flea markets have become a cultural phenomenon as well as an economic emporium. They have the ability to absorb the numerous influences in marketing trends, fashion, past and present, quirks in tastes; handle fanciful insights in people's imagination; and deal with vast resources of innumerable commodities. Despite the ever-changing landscapes of consumption, market strategies, and fickleness of public tastes, these markets attract a vast number of consumers on an on-going basis.

Shoppers spend many hours, much money and have enthusiasm for shopping that may be summed –up in a frequently used motto, “shop ‘til you drop.” In his book, *Enchanting a Disenchanted World; Revolutionizing the Means of Consumption*, George Ritzer states: “Consumption plays an ever-expanding role in the lives of individuals and that consumption pervades our lives; we are increasingly consumed by consumption.”⁷ He goes on further to state: “A revolutionary change has occurred in the places in which we consume goods and services, and it has a profound effect not only on the nature of consumption but also on social life as well.”⁸ He believes that, “We frequent those settings that offer the greatest spectacle and are enticed to consume to a point of hyperconsumption.”⁹ Flea markets are a manifestation against the dominant form of economics and consumption in the

primary sphere that is seen by many to be an overly closed system (ex. floor space per sq. foot, to profitability) rational, and constrained and boring. For those seeking escape and having social imagination, flea markets offer an alternative from pricey retail stores to overly shopped, “somewhat boring run of the mill malls. Shopping as we have known it is facing extinction.”¹⁰ “Buying up real estate, building box (like stores), filling them with inventory, it’s no longer enough to have the widest selection at the lowest prices,”¹¹ except at a Walmart which is like an indoor flea market.

More than a mere instrument of commerce, the institution of the flea market gives buying and selling a distinctive form. Culturally, they provide the shoppers with diversion such as entertainment, outdoor leisure, reprieve from the private sphere which is frequently isolating, to an exciting public domain that provides the individual with a visual feast of a seemingly infinite variety of merchandise. There is a belief that the future of retail is ‘shoppertainment’, suggests Goldberger as he states: “This will serve as the model for urban public space in this entertainment consuming age,”¹² Each vendor is seemingly aware of merchandising creativity in each stall or space they rent. An abundance of goods is visible, implying an almost unlimited number of choices; and so, encouraging shoppers to make their selection here and now. There is a creative (inventive) display of merchandise throughout the market. Individuality, mass marketing and creativity are steadfast throughout every aisle. As one walks about, one observes that flea market participation cuts across social and economic class as there is an easiness about coming, feeling welcome, and at home. Most sales are one to one and the owner is generally friendly, and trying to

make a sale. A sense of security and well-being pervades, as expectations of consumption are conspicuously and freely accomplished, allowing for a sense of satisfaction and excitement with many of the shoppers and vendors. Feelings of empowerment, accomplishment, and engagement keep customers at the market longer. This provides many opportunities for spending money purchasing goods and services at these market sites. The potency of American consumer culture is openly evidenced in these two flea markets simply by acknowledging the amount of bags and purchased items people are carrying around, and the animated interactions between vendors and shoppers.

A large part of the excitement of flea participation is the social nature of consumption. Interaction with people in this realm with the vast array of the commodities and with others is intensely gratifying. “In the new means of consumption, face-to-face relationships have been reduced (e.g., at the drive-in movies, in cyberspace, on home shopping networks, and at malls, etc.). Flea markets, especially those that are outdoors and therefore less structured, less controlling than overly planned, technologically intrusive, malls for instance, seem to animate and excite many individuals as the allure of the open/public space offers people the opportunity to participate in intense social forms of binding oneself to others and to objects/commodities themselves. In this openness, there is an altered orientation toward others and objects, “of relational intimacy of shared subjectivity and social integration,” (Cetina 1977, 2); that this type of market provides a flow of experiences that seems to mesmerize, overwhelm, and allows for “public zest and enthusiasm” (Rivlin 1986, 38); encouraging customers into a “neighborly, buying

spree torpor” (Essex, p. 29). Informal and less restricted structures of shopping, bargaining, and browsing in a leisurely manner, allow for a variety of human forms of sociality enhancing the experience at the end of the day. People begin to mix in ways that go beyond the neo-classical model of economic theory of mere economic exchanges. There is magic in a place where anything can happen, from uncovering a relic from the past, or a bargain, or having satisfaction from the immediacy of exchange, either socially or monetarily. This unconventional shopping opportunity is a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon-shopping for essentials while finding things one might not find anywhere else. Not having to pay any taxes, frequent deep discounts, and the excitement of uncertainty, makes flea market shopping compelling for thousands of people. These flea markets have become virtually one-stop shopping for the entire family due also to their location and accessibility. Public facilities-food vendors with an international bill of fare, located down the center aisle, with delicious smells emanating throughout the surrounding aisles make for a carnival like atmosphere that is irresistible for shoppers that spend several hours at the market. Restaurants located in the main raceway facilities offer basic American lunch type meals. What a place; it is terrific. Clean, large restrooms, a security office, a first aid station, help make this environment child friendly as well. According to Ritzer, shopping and commerce are the heart of civil life, and flea markets reflect the collective process of mass marketing and mass consumption in a society that is constantly consumed by consumption. “Call it the ubiquitous middle-class American taste culture; it manifests itself in everything” (Goldberger 1997, 58). As one walks around, one walks around, one has a feeling of being part of a

huge spectacle as one is surrounded by a panoply of consumer goods, from clothes with brand name high end merchandise, to off-fashion design-last year styles, to lower quality items. There are sporting goods, hardware, products for home use and improvement, adolescent attire, back to school supplies, fruits and vegetables, specialty items from custom jewelry to fur coats, rugs and furniture, the latest sounds in music, some priced at less than retail; most modestly priced, and there are always surprises.

Flea markets counteract mass culture sameness, blandness, and uniformity of many products, by frequently turning past experiences of boring shopping excursions into, as author Jo Hoffman in "New York" magazine exclaimed, "A co-ed sport, where he or she with the most discriminating taste and quickest reflexes wins."¹³ Flea markets are the 'in place' action scene of deep play and fun, where budget minded-but upscale smart customers browse, spend time and money, and lust for bargains-real and imagined. 'Shopping the market' as the lingo implies, is a frequently heard statement expressing the idea that for many people participating in the flea market: shoppers, vendors, and suppliers/manufacturers, it has proven to be worthwhile and exciting. Many have a perspective that these markets are creative economically-in other words as being value-laden, which also includes culturally fashionable. A profusion of vendors, wares and merchandise reflects a variety of styles worldwide in scope. The tables used by many vendors as part of their set up overflow with an amazing multitude of commodities, while the general rambling layout of vendors stalls often instill sensual overload that is most appealing to many shoppers. The environment advertises itself as total physical allure and the thrill of

perceived gratification cuts across class, race, gender, and age. The flea market is an environment that uplifts people, is exciting even joyful whether one is a shopper, vendor or a supplier/manufacture as the material reality lives up to the enchanted fantasy. For Ritzer, the spirit of modern consumerism leads to romantic, enchanted capitalism as all three categories of economic players are convinced they are beating the system in some manner either by paying in cash and avoiding taxes, or by having a thrill at the speed of which commodities change hands. The power of the use of cash, powerful egos engaged in business exchanging goods and services, and a feeling of beating the system provide dynamic enchantment for most with the flea market experience.

Within the multitudes of transaction, most are fixed price, while others have varying degrees of flexibility in the understanding that cash is king. For many buyers, the ritual of bargaining is as much allure as the bargain itself. Relaxed rules of commerce and the informality of these two flea markets, allow for verbal exchange transactions between shopper and vendor. Usually the shopper sees an item-‘a must have’- and the value or the state of condition may be uncertain or they inquire as to the flexibility of the price. This is “orchestrated to send subtle and unsubtle messages about price and value, ideology, fantasy and commerce” (Handelman 1997, 50). Usually this is done without being overly quarrelsome or disparaging, as each party needs one another to succeed from their own perspective. Any act of discourtesy inevitably puts an end to bargaining. The vendor using his/her expertise and knowledge of the item, and the shopper using keen observation, knowledge, and conventional wisdom, try to manipulate symbols, facts and fictions

in an attempt to gain some advantage over the other. This is almost always done without third party (salespeople) interference-directly between vendor/owner and customer or between vendor and supplier/manufacturer. However, there is an enormous plurality of small transactions concerning value and price and their determination of commodities, each more or less independent of the next; the overwhelming proportion of these face-to-face transactions involving two persons. It has proved to be that “one of the attractions to buyers and sellers alike is the market anonymity and absence of third party interference’ (Maisel 1974, 489). The flea market has become a social and economic event where buyer and seller match wits, share stories, and do business. “Haggling, in the sense of arguing, wrangling, caviling over terms with respect any aspect or condition of exchange (ie., not just price bargaining)” (Geertz 1979, 58), is part of the market scene in a limited manner for some vendors. This is exciting, idiosyncratic, and appealing to a large segment of the marketing population. There is a sense of risk, adventure, and a feeling of camaraderie with like-minded people while shopping, that one does not get at malls nor retail stores which tend to have closed contracts and often a mechanical and logical routine. Flea markets offer not only the quintessential bargain, but also ideology of class consumption, democracy and acquisition by all peoples combined with fantasy, fun and commerce. Furthermore, these markets, by being such a dynamic public sphere, seduce people by the very pleasure of physically being somewhere; of going to a place that is bigger, grander and in every way more exhilarating than anything an individual could experience at home or at a department store. No mall with a sterile, box-like formality could hope to duplicate the

perceived reality of these two flea market sites, real or imagined. The flea market is a major site for what anthropologist Sol Tax has called, “penny capitalism.” He goes on to state:

Once the exclusive feature of rural hamlets, these markets (variously called penny market, swap meets, merchandise marts or fairs) have proliferated on the urban landscape, selling not just produce or cheap used goods, as formally thought, but a wide variety of new and used goods, and not all of it cheap.”¹⁴

In the contemporary scene, these two flea markets have become a cornucopia of the latest and hottest brand names items on one end, to lesser quality copy-cat items that model status symbol garments. There is a mystical power of brand names which attracts and draws droves of shoppers to these two urban centered flea markets.

According to Veblen in his book, The Theory of the Leisure Class, “the consumption of luxuries, in the true sense, is a consumption directed to the comfort of the consumer himself, and is, therefore, a mark of the master.”¹⁵ “Commodity consumption and a relatedness to these items demonstrate what people care about through the medium of selecting goods” (Miller 1987, 5). In other words, a feature of shopping and consumption not classified as economic is the credence given by many that the consumption of goods is honorable and a mark of “prowess, dignity, and honor especially the consumption of more desirable goods”¹⁶ (ie. items with brand name labels with the implication reserved for the superior class). These items, trademarks, and shipping locale, tend to become virtues and command the respect of the community. Though Veblen calls this (by way or self-reproach) “an invidious distinction,” it has not lost its force in today’s society. In fact, the upper class and its followers not only seek to retain the separations and consumption of certain goods,

but use their buying power to maintain and fortify their perceived positions in the social order. Status is a hidden value being exchanged.

People not only come to the flea market for a shopping experience, they come for the hot designer brand-name merchandise at one-third off discount price. “They stalk merchandise they might never have touched at full price (i.e. in a department store) and probably have fun doing it, but they don’t want to save a dollar, they want to save \$30.” (DeCaro 1997, 71-72). Simply put, these two flea markets have become a major place to go to shop, to consume, to partake in the American Dream. People are drawn to these flea markets because of the immense scope and variety of merchandise offered. There is a prevailing concept held by many that more is better, and that the myriad of merchandise at these flea markets is a shoppers’ version of heaven on earth. “The expansion of object-centered environments situate and stabilize selves, define individual identity just as much as communities or families used to do, and which promote forms of sociality (social forms of binding self and others)” (Cetina 1977, 2). Shopping at flea markets has become a form of social and individual identity facilitating the transformation of social and economic relationships of like-minded, adventurous consumers. It has evolved over time as an institution in the informal economy as a dynamic setting which encourages many to be active participants in many more creative forms of consumption. There are complex sets of relations involving social consumption and economic considerations of maximizing one’s resource opportunities for expression, and choices that are part of the flea market phenomena. To comprehend the organization of social life around the economics of consumption, one must take into consideration that “the goods

themselves generate conversation, stories, rumors, and biographies” (Kopytoff 1986, 89) as they circulate from manufacturer, to malls, retail stores, to specialty stores and outlets to flea markets. “Individuals establish their own and each others’ social attachments to form a series of highly contextualized social bonds through which the people sometimes experience, interpret, judge, and create their ties to one another” (Geertz and Rosen 1979, 19).

There are specific ways in which the reproduction of the larger economy is articulated within the structure of the flea market. The circulation of commodities is just such a way. The institution of the flea market provides a coherent framework for the processes of exchange and commerce among manufacturers of commodities, vendors and consumers. “The flow of commodities in any given situation is a shifting compromise between socially regulated paths-(lines of credit for example), and competitively inspired diversions-(what sells best in each market and who is selling what commodity next to you” (Appadurai 1986, 14). Partnerships, friendships, associations, business arrangements concerning trust and credit and information develop between manufacturers and vendors primarily, and some customers, to bring the most desirable products and services to market. A categorization of commodities at these markets are as follows:

- 1) clothing – fashionable name brand items, top of the line-well known manufacturers
 - fashionable – lesser known manufacturers
 - cheaper quality items – known as ‘copy car’ items
 - mark-downs
 - seconds, slightly irregular, slightly flawed
 - off season, past fashions
 - specific items customers wanted

- 2) footwear - shoes, sneakers – all types, all sizes, varieties – color, quality... by the truck load
- 3) jewelry - frequently customers made; the vendor made the items or bought the pieces wholesale. Very specific, personal styles; shoppers . would frequently have a favorite vendor.
- 4) hardware - wide variety – new and used
- 5) ‘supermarket seconds’ – every kitchen and bath and home use product not packaged correctly or brought back to the store opened and unused. Purchased by the truckload; brought to the flea market by the truckload.
- 6) furniture new – bought in by large trucks straight from the factory, warehouse, showroom – usually in very good condition.
- 7) antiques few at these two markets – dealer/collector is usually in the business; spends much time collecting items all week to bring them to market.
- 8) school supplies – many vendors – all the basics; one vendor with very fancy, expensive pens.
- 9) fruits/vegetables – fresh, delicious and inexpensive – several large scale vendors brought in by the truckload.
- 10) children’s wear – plentiful and cheap
- 11) sporting goods – limited amount, fairly priced, very few vendors; also, bicycles.
- 12) beauty items – perfumes, shampoos, etc. – plentiful
- 13) music – seemingly everything in sounds – ole, new; everything in between.
- 14) home furnishings – wide range of items – very reasonably prices.
- 15) accessories – handbags, etc, of every description – some hand made; fine presents, wide range of prices.
- 16) knick-knacks of every description – some hand made; fine presents, wide range of prices.
- 17) underwear – socks, etc., - the works...
- 18) specialty items – fur coats, leather jackets – must come to the flea market to

see and experience.....

19) rugs – of every description – wide range of styles, qualities, and prices.

20) professional services – taxes, legal, loans, etc.

There seems to be an unlimited amount to the number and amount of new products that come into existence as the source to supplies are virtually worldwide. There are so many personal and business connections in the informal economy between manufacturers, suppliers, and vendors, it seems the connections have connections, contacts and more contacts; new players from around the world infuse the market with new items and dynamic energy and determination. There is a democratization as vendors, shoppers and manufacturers have increasingly wide ranges of choices and options in doing business – either as producer, supplier, or consumer. Furthermore, there is an increase in face-to-face liaisons in these markets even in an age of efficient, impersonal limited interaction involving buying and selling. The flea market is the American melting pot in microcosm. The diversity becomes community. Both these flea markets offer maximum opportunities at reasonable costs for buying and satisfying needs, as one actively wanders about gazing, being outdoors and being with others. These two markets have really become outdoor super-centers, an Americanization of the age-old activity of consumption. The amount of labor and organization that goes into an operation like this is phenomenal. If everybody weren't so cooperative, it would not work. Durkheim considers cooperation as fundamental in the evolution of the division of labor. These flea markets offer a different approach to doing business, to consuming and selling. For bargains and for fun, flea markets shopping is tough to beat.

Chapter 6

Manufacturers/ Suppliers –the Third Tier in the Triad of Flea Market Success: Some aspects of the Clothing business -The Cash Underground Economy and Their Connections to These Two Flea Markets Sites

These two flea markets are in proximity of New York City – a center of fashion, commerce and influence. Before globalization, these two flea markets were primarily supplied by the local industries of the New York Metropolitan area. This includes the garment center, headquarters for many of the industrial and corporate giants in America. There are various business sites – lower Manhattan, seventh avenue, and Madison avenue that are intensely involved in business dealings with these two flea markets. With an assortment of production sites in these areas - the most famous to the individual entrepreneur, it has become one of the major hubs of business with the ability to manufacture and transport if necessary an infinite variety, and seemingly endless amount of merchandise. The direct beneficiaries of supplying an immense amount of merchandise to these two market sites are the manufacturers/suppliers, vendors and shoppers. This is a primary reason for the huge success of both Aqueduct and Roosevelt flea markets – a seemingly endless supply of commodities well below retail.

The cash underground economy flourishes here. An immense, informal network of cash, merchandise and human activity, fills in where the conventional economy falls short or fails. Neither the overall economy nor the cash/underground - alternative economy can be adequately understood in isolation from each other. Most of the models of the economy or its characterization on various criteria hardly take

into account the fact of a systematic existence of the underground economy as an essential component of the successful operation of large flea markets. It is an “economy (frequently) described as hidden, submerged, irregular, informal, and that comprises the work that government found difficult to tax effectively and that eluded economists’ capacity to measure and analyze” (Pahl 1987, 38). It is a network relying on expected reciprocity, kinship like relations which are enhanced by lengthily introductions, frequently sharing stories of a similar past, usually of an immigrant experience, growing up in a particular neighborhood, and with reference to specific individuals some dead; others very much alive. Manufacturers and vendors are sizing each other, probing and looking for areas of commonality allowing for the development of trust. With its own ideas of economic realities, norms, and modes of operation “the informal sector describes economic activity that takes place outside the formal norms of economic transactions established by the state and formal business practices but which is clearly not illegal in itself” (Cross, p. 1). It is this evasion, excitement, and feeling of beating the system, that generate feelings of satisfaction having power over one’s life. Important as this is, it is secondary to making money conducting business off the books; which generates cash incomes, jobs, and the flow of goods and services. Trust, cooperation, and toleration allows one to make even more money which is the driving force for this phenomena. Basic market activity requires that people engage each other’s presence. Because their livelihood depends on it, the vendors must intrude themselves into the lives of manufactures who were willing to deal off the books. It had some risk that could be managed in a rational, cautious and secretive manner.

Who are these people that become the business proprietors that have provided such an immense array of merchandise for these two flea market especially in the garment trade? In order to understand the major and minor manufacturers that have supplied the business my family and I were in, the focus must turn to the seminal experience of the immigrant who came to America from Europe primarily, to start a life in a new land. The essence of that life was realizing the “American Dream.” Having enough money was a sure way of realizing one’s goals. We met and dealt with individuals infused with business attitudes and ethics that were subsumed within the attitude of not having enough when young, and therefore determined to be empowered financially and as an individual “making it big time”. Beyond any question the motivating variables in the underground economy was cash and ego. Furthermore, there was a complex interweaving of an attitude of laissez faire, feelings of empowerment, and excitement.

We also dealt extensively with the second generation – the children of the founders of these businesses who were themselves middle age. Their roots were local – even if they came from Europe originally or had a European background by virtue of being raised by immigrants. They had strong feelings for those that raised them, helped or hurt them. Early memories of the local neighborhood ran deep. They tell stories of the struggles they had when young, and how they did not always succeed; and the adjustments that were made. Their stories included people – relatives and friends – in their lives that had the most impact on them, as well as local establishments such as synagogues, or churches, candy stores, and the school yard that had a pivotal impact on them. Trust and loyalty are primary social values

and are major traits that play a surprising and central role in their lives in conducting business, even today.

It is paramount to take this into consideration when conducting business with these people especially at the initial encounters and introductions as impressions are being made. One inevitability had to establish recognition, as the dialogue steadfastly concerned itself with why you are here and who sent you; how did you hear about me, and what do you want? In today's industrial world, informal economic activity takes place in society where the impersonal marketplace has come to dominate most economic activity; yet in the cash underground economy, networks are an essential part of the force of social cohesion.

The second phase of interaction between supplier/manufacture and vendor was the process of identifying with the sensitivities and pertinent questions presented. One sure way of immediately establishing oneself in a manner the other could instantly identify with was succinctly saying what you are doing now, and that you are getting into the flea market or expanding your business, and this line of merchandise would be very beneficial to your enterprise, and the potential to make money was terrific. A major part of (establishing identity) the identification process was to focus on, where you are from. The local neighborhood would be the aim of the conversation, as any thing else such as a borough or simply a county was much too abstract in attempting to take full measure if who you were. Naming local hang-outs, the mutuality of friends, (do you know so an so?) sports that one might have played, and a story or two would bring out such deep feelings as if to turn these very success entrepreneurs into little kids. I watched another generation establishing the

basis for the initiation into the cash underground economy. The importance of social value relationships cannot be overestimated.

Specifics would now begin to be discussed as the initial phase of negotiation of the deal would be outlined. We would often be given a brief tour of the operations to allow us better understanding the scope of what was done on the premises and the true nature of the particular business. A deal was then formalized. The terms were tentatively made. What type of merchandise was to be exchanged, amounts were usually by the dozen, method of payment, and credit lines, were all discussed. In all but one case, payments were to be made in cash. The one major company that wanted payment by check was so successful that the amounts of money exchanged were so small by their standards that cash was considered too bothersome. In other words, the additional headaches that might be brought about by using cash such as accounting inconsistencies, lawyers, or IRS officials were simply not worth it to the owner. To do business with him, he insisted, payment had to be made by check with legitimate paperwork – actual records. The common practice was to use two sets of books, phony receipts, and inaccurate amounts recorded. One had to sometimes show money was exchanging hands for the ceremoniously paying artificially low tax returns.

Delivery of merchandise would be discussed. Since we had a van, our own mode of transportation, business life in this part of the informal underground economy became much easier and more beneficial to all concerned. We would arrange a time, usually in the afternoon after the buyers from the large accounts such as Macy's, Lord and Taylor, and other major clients the business owners had accounts with, left

after placing very large orders. Manufacturers did not want these major stores to know he was supplying the flea markets with similar merchandise at a fraction of the cost. We would drive to Manhattan, usually one afternoon every other week and go to a designated area in the back or side entrance of the building and wait a few minutes. A large, very wide metal door would open, usually from a loading area – this seemed to be a general practice with several of the manufacturers we did business with – and the goods we had ordered at a previous meeting and most often other merchandise would be wheeled out. The owner usually found goods he did not realize he had, or it was old inventory, or floor samples, which would certainly sell well at the flea market. We welcomed this procedure as the cost was minimal and it just added to our profits. Usually the amount of goods was very large; so varied in styles and color, that we immediately knew we would be very successful in the coming weeks in the flea market. We bought at a very low price, managed to get the top quality merchandise and knew our customers at the market would be very happy. Afterward, I would sit in the van and my father and the manufacturer would go into a hallway or an empty unused room and exchange cash. False receipts as described previously, were given-maybe; a handshake, and a smile, and a promise to call or stop by at a latter date would be tentatively arranged. Being a retired police officer, my father had his gun with him. Business was not only profitable but adventurous as well. Being one's own boss, dealing with cash with some major firms, and setting a convenient schedule for oneself, has a powerful satisfying affect on one's ego. In these types of exchanges in the cash underground economy or the informal economy, one has a feeling of confidence, competence, and power in having money and

spending it as one chooses in order to enhance one's life and the significant others one is with. These are wonderful feelings and a compelling reason to be involved in flea market activity.

Once we were able to accommodate the ever increasing amounts of merchandise we acquired by renting storage space, we wanted to diversify what we sold and even began to seek new opportunities-new contacts. Two basic strategies were used. Particularistic relationships in this type of business dealing with manufactures/suppliers who have decided to carry on business with flea market vendors are often used both to enforce existing obligations-usually lines of credit and capital formation, and to help vendors make new contacts whenever possible. Their memories of past business dealings with people was telling. This is their livelihood and way of life; they were serious entrepreneurs, determined, and dedicated to business. They also loved to play 'the game' and be in the action, and make lots of money. They actually supplied us with new contacts. They spread the business around. Having acquired an excellent reputation, opened new doors leading to more contacts; leading to increased merchandise, leading to increased sales. These other businesses operated in a similar manner. They tended to be smaller in size and volume, and frequently specialized in manufacturing a specific item-pocket books, accessories, etc. These industries were very successful in their own right both in the primary economy and in the cash underground economy as well. We had gone from mainline fashions in the undergarment business to bathrobes. What a magnificent setting - it was much less factory looking with its accompanying drabness and old worn out look. This new supplier had a showroom where all the styles were

displayed. The major reason was that these bathrobes were made in a factory in Pennsylvania where the cost of doing business was lower. Showing off the robes in such resplendent fashion added value and prestige to the company as well as to the robes themselves. Where there was a showroom even in the first rate places, it was utilitarian in nature-smaller and plain looking. Some owners did not want to attract unnecessary attention to themselves in case IRS agents came around. This time we were dealing with a supplier who wanted everyone to know his business. It was a personnel choice to take this risk. Ok. He was good for us, and we for him. We got into the bathrobe business. He loved the cash; we loved the robes, and so did the shoppers.

There are mutual dependencies in these relationships between manufacturers/suppliers and vendors in this style of conducting business. Each party has economic advantages and this translates into bargaining strength. In turn, this will effect the determination of the interacting exchange. It has its own structures based on experience, knowledge, friendship, need and power. There are, of course, differences in ritual and etiquette, depending on the individuals and their own personal background and current level of success. There are these social rules of communal standards and business understandings; and if they are recognized and honored, a social bond develops that transcends the immediate transaction concerning value and agreement on a fair price. Expectations between the manufacturer/ supplier and the vendor are negotiated and if realized, the one's reputation of a decent individual to do business spreads. The risks seem relatively

small and the amount of money to be made is large. It is fun, exciting, empowering, and exceptionally good for the flourishing of these two flea market sites.

Exposing the character of this way of doing business is problematic. Empirical data is hard to come by for obvious reasons. Under-declaring (incorrect amounts of money are falsely recorded by individuals or manufacturers) or not declaring at all these types of business transactions to avoid paying proper income tax, is a major part of how things are done. Part of the income that is earned both by the supplier and the vendor is a result of tax evasion. The savings are then passed to the consumer. Currently in flea markets, the government requires sales receipts. It is still impossible for government officials to keep exact records of every transaction and therefore, the differences in the legal, accurate amounts of taxes paid to the government and the actual amounts being paid helps provide an impetus for economic activity resulting in a huge quantity of merchandise supplied to these two flea market sites. Though one must show receipts of some economic activity, just how much and to which agency is flexible in part because of accounting incongruities. There is a net gain to all parties involved: manufacturers/suppliers, vendors and to the shopper as well.

These purchases are the key to success at these two large flea markets. Buying low in the cash/underground economy and selling for below retail in what many refer to as the secondary economy or what Kabra calls “the gray economy.” Within the social source of the arrangement, there are accepted and expected rates of return usually negotiated between two economic actors and frequently based on the character and resources of these two entrepreneurs. There are of course opportunities

and constraints with each business deal, which tends to increase as the relationship stabilizes. “It is futile to counter pose the behavior of the businessmen, or their morals or their nature to the extent of public control and regulation” (Kabra 1982, 10). Businesses must strive to outdo competitors. The methods available to businesses for distinguishing their commodity from others in the market are subject to their ingenuity. Such methods may include product improvement, a unique promotional campaign, a new twist in servicing, a change in distribution channels, or an enticing price adjustment. These manufacturers tend to have a fine product, and many can afford advertising; yet, the informal economy allows for unique distribution and a price that cannot be beat. These extensive, informal, small sized economic activities are important because they are all inter-dependent, inter-related factors such as employment and wages, and in their complex totality are part of the overall economy.

Informal economic activity, local economic circumstances and social links involving friendships and acquaintances holds a powerful attraction. There is ample opportunity for vendors who have become increasing well off. “In particular, analysts concerned with the shift to postindustrial society have called attention to a significant growth in the informal sector among relatively affluent populations in the modern welfare state” (Gaughan and Ferman 1987, 23). It must be recognized as postindustrial alternatives, serving the needs of an increasing number excluded by or dropping out of advanced industrial economies. In the informal sector is characterized by “the transitory nature of the event; less rigid calculation of prices; profit seen as a windfall; bargaining as the norm; recycling of goods; extreme

diversity of goods, creating the ambience of a treasure hunt” (Herrman and Soiffer 1987, 413). This economic activity acts as a buffer against globalization and increased competition both for the manufacturer/supplier and vendor. The underground economy it can be argued is contrary to Marx’s well known characterization of capitalistic relations as “leaving no bond between man and man than naked self-interest”. In the scope of the flea market and economic activity in the informal – secondary economy, there is a combining of contradictory elements such as: harsh economic conditions (ie. job lose) and declining discretionary income, alienation, disenchantment, increased individuality and loss of community feelings, with participation, fun, reciprocity, profit and sense of community and power in making it in the world. There are areas of congruence between independence and cooperation, formal adherence to regulatory record keeping and accounting inconsistencies, between the primary sector and flea market activity. The organization of the informal sector is idiosyncratic and complex, implying a different form of organization much of which depends on local conditions and business practices, state structures and their intervention, and market realities.

These cash based exchanges cut through red tape, delays in production, paperwork, hierarchical decisions, and even effected (by speeding up) production schedules. What we needed to sell immediately in the flea market was promptly transformed into a production order and we got a very fast shipment of merchandise. This major characteristic of the informal-social aspect of the economy is tightly linked to the cash economy and can be seen as essentially a cash-based extension of it. Having a blurred distinction of the social economy primarily trust, and cash

exchanges, as well as established credit lines, allowed for a vast amount of merchandise to leave Manhattan and be available to be sold at these two busy flea markets. It seemed like a virtual never ending flow of commodities of unimaginable quantities. These two flea markets were well supplied, and not at all out done by malls or major department stores.

Though much of the irregular economy may be considered outside the law because it avoids some government regulation and side-steps most taxation requirements, it is not explicitly illegal as the activities of the criminal economy. Bringing the informal economy into the wider picture of economic activity thus challenges accepted categories of economic behavior. The logic of fashion and consumption are no longer exclusively a top down approach whereby manufacturers and advertising tended to dictate fashions; now consumers provide some of the innovation for new trends and meanings. Response time to new trends, tastes and desires is rapid. Illustrative to the point: a famous designer came out with a new line of slips for women. A successful manufacturer that we were involved in business with asked me to go to a major department store in Manhattan and purchase one specific item in this new collection for him; so he would be able to produce a copy cat version. I did; and he made a cheaper style (quality of material and workmanship) for 75% less expensive in price. We beat or kept pace with changing market conditions because of our contacts, information and use of cash. This paved the way for having a successful business by having the ability to sell at a very low price while keeping up with fashions displayed and sold at department stores and

markets. Self-interest, cooperation and collective judgment help insure profitable business practices.

Secondarily, some vendors go to “close-outs” to attempt to purchase goods. Advertised in local newspapers, or by fliers that are distributed at the flea market, these “close-outs” are usually conducted at a warehouse or someone’s store. These sellers were frequently entrepreneurs in a small business, or owned a store, and were now going out of business, usually retiring or going into something else. Merchandise and racks, shelving, and miscellaneous items such as sign holders or brackets would be on sale. One would show-up at a certain announced time and the seller would usually announce what was happening in terms of what was being sold and the asking price. Usually the prices were so good – low and very fair, that there was little discussion, especially if paid in cash. Though this is an important source of goods for the flea market and for vendors themselves, it was much less voluminous than the major supply networks.

In compendium, the informal economy has not developed simply because there is a failure in traditional economic systems of distribution. A good part of the informal economy, with its emphasis on mutual obligation and reciprocity, configures a nexus of social and economic cohesion that forms the social basis of informal economic activity. There are basic value orientations that though not all encompassing, are a dominant part of formal and informal relations, and frequently determine the direction or flow of the deal. People provision themselves from a wide and diverse range of economic exchanges and transactions, in this case with corporate derived goods. These individual entrepreneurs that are so active in the cash underground

(informal) economy are an independent sort empowered by transactions that take place outside normal economic activity. Market strategies that developed in creative ways have lead to huge successes in these two flea market sites. In this 'hidden economy' people make a living most of it in cash, which provides for the impetus for numerous transactions which are embedded in social and economic networks; not entirely separate from the primary economy. The location of these two large successful flea markets and their nearness to Manhattan with its centers of fashion, culture, production and transportation, have seemingly an unlimited supply of commodities. This has been a boon to vendors, shoppers, and manufactures/suppliers.

Chapter 7

Flea Markets as Democratic Process – Consumption and Commodity Exchange in an Informal Setting: Resistance, Empowerment, and Fun

The spirit of cooperation between vendors and manufacturer/suppliers permeates the flea market construction of exchange relations. A social constructionist perspective from micro to macro is much more realistic in explaining flea market behavior, and therefore, more valid than the prevailing neo-classical economic theories. It is more valid because it shows that there are usually different ways that professions, businesses and relationships could have been structured and that the particular ways this developed is not the only possible way. Flea markets developed as part of the informal economy, where the reality of relationships across group boundaries and the way in which adjustments are continually made to new or emerging market situations forms part of the social structure. The nature of interaction between groups with their own specificities such as socially constructed concepts of justice, empowerment, empathy, fairness, resistance, and fun, form the particularities of the specific flea market. Patterns of work and consumption tell us much about a person's life. There is power in having some control of buying and selling and defining its role in one's life. Having a feeling of beating the system, and feeling oneself to be part of a community or participant in an alternative economic activity or lifestyle in this type of environment is both fun and empowering. There is a sense of daring and a feeling of existential control in participating in the flea market as a manufacturer/supplier, or vendor, or as a shopper in acquiring goods and services and dealing in the immediate transaction that is cash based. In the cash

underground economy people feel free to somewhat reformulate their ideological outlook concerning making a living, and in defining their consumption patterns or needs in relation to the primary economic and dominant cultural trends.

A major social construction in doing business in the informal economy that is both unconventional and hospitable is the value of fairness and justice in dealing with people. These flea markets allow the participants, “to structure their actions, especially pricing, by a generalized concept of justice” (Soiffer and Herrmann 1987, 66). Social justice and fairness in the economic sense is defined as, “a theory founded on principles determined by the way in which assets are acquired, transferred, and past injustices rectified” (Keita 1992, 121). There is an allure by many participants in flea markets (manufacturer/suppliers, vendors, and shoppers) that price setting is somewhat flexible in some circumstances. Some see this as a survival strategy, and it is how many see themselves defending themselves against the attacks on their standard of living. Developing a sense of thrift is part of this strategy for some, as there is a dynamic tension of desires and what one can actually afford. Shopping brings to one’s conscious: class, culture and symbolism of brand names and one’s relationship to the dominant consumption patterns of society. These two huge flea markets and the cash underground economy with an inherent number of possibilities and choices, allows the participants to own and enjoy new things. It increases opportunities for shopping to be experienced as a form of saving money. The flea market, though related to the dominant economy, provides alternative rationalities in dealing with the material reality for a wide range of working people. Flea markets increase the ability to create and gain meaning in

one's life – as a manufacturer/supplier by enhancing business opportunities; as a vendor being a small entrepreneur, and as a shopper controlling one's time and to a large extent, one's purchases either by one-stop shopping, or roaming leisurely through as many lanes of displayed merchandise as one chooses. Empowerment is enhanced as feelings of competence, self-reliance, and expertise are appropriated by participating in the multifaceted aspects of flea market activity. Shoppers sometimes have a deep sense of satisfaction of not only getting a fair price (perceived or real) but on not being totally dependent on the formal primary economy with its limited tastes in fashion, formal pricing, and dominant ideology. This allows for more individualized or subjective responses that are less conforming and more meaningful to the shopping experience. A sense of beating the system and a feeling of independence is as important as getting the right price for the item. This is not an inherent quality of the marketplace in the primary economy where people have little control over their labor or of the price they have to pay. All parties – manufacturer/supplier, vendor, and shopper have a sense of distancing themselves from the harshness and at times the rigidity of the dominant rationally structured formal economy where they would play a minor role, and perhaps feel alienated. There is a sense of enchantment, contentment, and pride by the economic players of flea market activity that often comes about in this alternative setting. It is the feeling of defiance of mass-marketed consumerism and high prices charged, and a sense of satisfaction of 'I'm making it.' Throughout the flea markets of Aqueeduct and Roosevelt, one gets a powerful sense throughout the day, by peoples' comments and vigorous participation in the market itself, of satisfaction that is felt by many as they

shop and spend money at these sites. There is a feeling of abatement from disenfranchisement and powerlessness that is so often a part of their everyday shopping experiences in the dominant economy.

Creating alternative parameters of exchange in the informal economy allows for a rationale consisting of a variety of variables other than maximization of utility in the purely economic sense. According to Fiske, there are a number of individuals that participate in popular culture and the informal economy that construct a sense of resistance to the dominate forms of consumption and social meanings; yet it is in the act of consumption they can feel part of the middle class. “The need for ‘display’ is a need for self-esteem and respect that is denied by the conditions of production, but that may be met by the conditions of consumption” (Fiske 1989, 28). This type of rationality whereby people construct their own social meanings “in an age of commercialization and disembeddedness of social relations,” (Cetina 1997, 21), the informal economy, specifically flea markets, offers a community-based stable framework that enhances the commodity exchange shopping experience. All three groups (manufacturer/suppliers, vendors and shoppers) are affected by this context of formal/informal structure of the informal economy. Flea markets are less scripted and more personable; profit motivated and self-interest strategies are permeated by the subjective domain and the range of human emotion and intimacy. There seems to be a deep seated gratification and feeling of satisfaction and fun in many of the economic participants in the flea market and cash underground economy either as suppliers, consumers or both. As the corporate economy is taken as the exclusive focus of economic activity and the perception of other forms of economic activity is

seen as unimportant or even as deviant, “overlooked is the fact that people provision themselves from a wide and diverse range of economic exchanges and transactions, with corporate-derived goods and services only fulfilling a small part of any person’s needs. Certainly, the informal economy compromises normal economic activities that resemble much of what is commonly considered conventional economic activity. Nonetheless, a very wide range of informal economic activity is of the social variety, part of a cohesive force uniting people (in these two market places) are kinship, reciprocity and community” (Miller 1998, 5).

The phenomenal growth of flea markets cannot just be explained by one variable – having the right price. One must take into account the merits and the key role that moral values, social bonds, and individual proclivities play in the real lives of economic actors. An example might be a vendor dealing with a supplier that helped him get started, but is no longer so cheap. Loyalty and friendship have a powerful role here. There are varying degrees of motivation, an infinite variety of decision making styles that are everyday economic realities for people involved in flea market activities. In this setting, the parameters of exchange are not as clear cut nor as closed or fixed in their pricing system as found in the primary economy, as in malls, or in brick-and-mortar shops. The major structure of the cash underground economy and these two flea markets is its decentralized power structure. A wide range of human behavior is seen and encouraged not only adding to business acumen, but to the fun and excitement of it all. Therefore, as a workplace and consumption site, there is a modicum of control of not only conditions of exchange, but of meanings. The circulation of commodities have meanings (Appadurai, 1986); the act of

shopping at flea markets has meaning (Fiske, 1989) even the different uses of money (especially cash) are assigned meanings (Zelizer, 1994). Manufacture/suppliers, vendors, nor shoppers, are faced with a formidable, formal, objectified system not formal legal system, and therefore, this allows the economic participants more options in selling and buying, and assigning meaning to their activity. Specifically, there is a sense of independence and deep-seated satisfaction for both men and women not only in buying and selling, but of being in business for oneself. The feeling of working and consuming where there is more opportunity for success lends itself to overcoming alienation. There is substantial affirmation of self, a large degree of autonomy and entrepreneurial pride in the flea market as well as being part of the cash underground economy. Experience developed in the marketplace and increased expertise allows for a heterodox understanding of what constitutes business, business sense and a functioning rationality in manufacturer/suppliers, vendors, and shoppers. There is a dignity in working, doing business, and shopping the flea market by making it work as a community for most individuals (Cf. Etzioni, 1988; Gaughan and Ferman, 1987; Geertz, 1963, 1983; Miller, 1987; Soiffer and Herrmann, 1987). The idea of utility as the satisfaction of one's wants (rather than 'getting over' on the other), trusting one's neighboring vendors and co-workers, and reciprocity as social exchange – must be seen and understood as a necessary component of success at the flea market. These socially established attributes are paramount, and therefore, must be a vital component in understanding the many social aspects of rationality and utility such as realizing that one's success at these flea markets as manufacture/supplier, vendor or shopper, is maximized cooperating

and working with others. These factors have affected economic action - working and making connections and making a living in the cash underground economy whereby definition there is a lack of formal institutionalized norms of conducting business and therefore a lack of legal guarantees in relations with economic players.

Self-meaning and utility maximization as rational processes are observed characteristics at these flea markets. Included within however, are characteristics such as empathy toward others, moral concerns, religious impulses and resistance to the meanness, competitiveness, and overall domination of the primary economy. A major attraction and source for joy and a feeling of renewal in being part of the flea market for many people is its embeddedness in the informal economy, having less formal structure, allowing and encouraging the development of a full meaningful self in an economic setting. Delightful individual proclivities- qualities as quirkiness, colorfulness, reliance, compassion, and competence are seen throughout the flea market. There seems to be an active ideological, thought-out central theme of controlling one's personhood by attempting to distance oneself from oppressive, manipulative aspects of the dominant economy. These underpinnings of exchange relations in the flea market are part of "complex beliefs and practices which are designed to hold social (and economic) institutions at arm's length" (Soiffer and Hermann 1987, 70). As individuals repel the dominant forms of prescribed patterns of shopping, consumption and exchange, there is a realization that much behavior of participants in flea markets has a decentralized outlook – an antipathy to one absolute mode of economic thinking, consuming or being. There is reluctance to operating in a linear, automatic fashion in conducting business. Ideas of 'what's in

or out' of vogue or ways of consuming are part of the essence of self-definitions so evident in a flea market settings that one concludes people love things and create themselves through things, to a significant degree, in this consumer culture within social structures of society and individualized perception to it. "There's magic in a place where anything can happen, any strange ion can be unearthed. The flea market allows us to become children again, to play dress-up and try on funny hats, to embark on an adventure of discovery and surprise. It also allows us to reclaim relics of our past that have been swept away by time only to reappear again, almost miraculously, at the market" (McCree 1984, 48). He goes on to say "flea markets mean freedom from the 9-5 world of lawyers, leases, inflation and taxation; freedom to choose when, where and what you will sell; freedom to be what you want to be" (p. 40). There is not one set of criteria for commodity exchange and for conducting business – co-determinations appear to be the modus operandi of many colorful, multifaceted, economic participants of these flea markets.

The heart of the flea market is the exchange relationship. These flea markets provide "a social mechanism for the production and exchange of goods and services: an economic system"(Geertz 1963, 72). The fact that a dominant feature of these flea markets is that they are constructed with their own institutional structures and practical procedures. Not by formal legality, but socially established norms and procedures which provides a high degree of predictability, adding to the control over patterns of exchange in selling and consumption; yet allowing for a high degree of individuality, creativity and fun. These markets provide an opportunity for the integration of three basic functions: the economic sphere of exchange, social –

political arrangements and culture as an ongoing, interconnecting, dynamic, “meaning-making medium” (Hefner 1988, 5). The orientation here has focused on the multifaceted aspects of non-contractual, negotiable (in some cases) exchanges in all three categories of economic players-manufacturers/suppliers, vendors and shoppers. In these markets with a variety of semi- structured, fluid situations, wonderful opportunities for shoppers to be creative individuals exists as they act upon internalized values not fully appreciated at malls or discount outlets. Means of self-expression, self definition, and personification is evident as one observes and interacts with shoppers. Personhood is enhanced through the acts of buying and selling throughout the flea market as well as the cash underground economy. Nostalgia for the old either in terms of objects, or for a simpler shopping experience, gives meaning from the consumption and interchange of goods that are found in these flea market sites, intensifying the feeling of gratification.

Flea markets are inherently democratic. Their distinctive form and development away from the top-down hierarchical approach allows one to express a free-spirited and playful nature. A nominal entrance fee provides accessibility and acceptance with an aura of spectacle; yet a belonging pervades. It is an act of approbation. Autonomy and individuality are not only tolerated, but also encouraged to flourish, as piquant feelings envelop shoppers and vendors alike. Flea markets have become successful consumer systems by offering both pleasure and power. Individual subjectivity in consumer tastes are honored as vendors seek enthusiastically to satisfy whenever possible, a wide array of consumer tastes, usually at a very reasonable price. As all are welcome, there is no discrimination here as class

differences are subsumed under a non-discriminating plurality of free-wheeling, cash-oriented exchanges, where people mingle actively without regard to the superficialities of class, race, ethnicity or gender. In this openness and egalitarian nature that both Aqueduct and Roosevelt flea markets display, there is no overriding boundary of hierarchy of tastes (Baudrillard, 1969), nor a necessity of cultural capital (P. Bourdieu, 1979; translated 1984). Flea markets offer unlimited opportunities for “cultural maneuvering” (Ibid., p.35). “Getting and spending has become the most passionate and often the most imaginative endeavor of modern life” (Twitchell 1999, 290). Much of consumption is done within the context of culture or cultures as people pick and choose – it is not just use value as commodity for functionality, but culture influencing choices as choices influences culture. It is a two-way street. Yet there is a persistent tension between the value system of malls and department stores and the flea market. Baudrillard believes that individual desires are disguised expressions of social differences in a system of cultural meanings that is produced through commodities. This fashion system is a code and infinitely variable set of “social differences- that people access through consumption.”¹⁷ According to Fiske, “Consumption then becomes a way of using the commodity system that gives the consumer some degree of control over the meanings it makes possible. Commodities are not just objects of economic exchange; they are goods to think with, goods to speak with” (1989, 31). These flea markets are crowded with consumers who refuse to be subjected or simply be limited by the mall, or the latest in dominant fashion statement sameness. To many of them, the flea market is seen as an alternative. These individuals might be best understood in part as being opposed to or offering

resistance to dominant economic and cultural practices by being active participants in the flea market scene. According to Fiske:

Popular culture is the culture of the subordinate who resent their subordination; it is not concerned with finding consensual meanings or with producing social rituals that harmonize social differences, as the liberal pluralists would have it. Equally, however, it is not the culture of subordination that massifies or commodifies people into the victimized dupes of capitalism, as mass cultural theorists propose. Different though these two arguments are, they both find in popular culture only those forces that work in favor to the status quo-the liberal pluralists may define this in terms of a consensus, and the mass culturalists in terms of the power of the dominant classes, but neither argument allows popular culture to work as an agent of destabilization or as a redistributor of the balance of social power toward the disempowered. They are therefore inadequate” (1989, 7-8).

“The context of consumption matters” (Chin 1986, 3). Flea market materialism does not reek with inequality, conspicuous consumption nor elitism. In fact, by its very nature, it is egalitarian to its core; yet is just as materialistic as the rest of society. The flea market is empowering to its participants as vendors (both men and women), consumers and manufacturer/suppliers. (At the core of flea markets and the underground cash economy, seeming contradictions are overcome – there is a quality of independence – less restrictive, less compulsory regulations, less obligatory behavior; yet also a shared consciousness of cooperation and togetherness, allowing for a sense of theater.) It allows multiple behavior modes, granting the ability to be different, non-conformist, as it encourages a wide range of self-identification and expression. There is an extension of individual desires into the public sphere, as these specific marketplaces offer an openness that is not only less restrictive, but enhances the shopping and working experience. It offers some means of coping with the frustrations of the capitalist conditions of productions. “The realm of consumption offers ample space for people to find profound meaning in their worlds

and existence, to integrate (rather than fragment) a sense of self, and to utter or to perform commentaries about what they see and feel in daily living” (Chin 1986, 178). Flea markets are constituted to creatively indulge new forms of expression in the production of social meanings. Chin states: “consumption and culture in America suggests something much more than consumption as status brands: in contemporary society everything is potentially commoditized and our lives are enmeshed with consumption not only through names and status items, but also through a myriad other commodities bought and sold today, both tangible and intangible” (Ibid., p. 8). Consumption has become imperative to the everyday specifics of our daily lives. Commodities are value-laden economically and socially. Miller believes “shopping to be a vicarious entry into social relations, but it may lead much further towards understanding contemporary social relationships as shoppers develop and imagine those social relationships which they most care about through the medium of selecting goods” (pps.4-5).

Left leaning scholars have too often reduced the complexities of consumption to wasteful, mass consumption with deadening conformity. The core of their critique is that many consumers are inactive, docile, passive, empty vessels that are simply duped by manufacturers and guru advertising agents. They were seen as hegemonic instillers of social meaning, creating false needs. As part of the commodification of daily life, materialism has triumphed (Twitchell, 1999); commodities have a social, historical, cultural life (Appadurai, 1986); they are also used to enchant a disenchanted world (Ritzer, 1999); they can be used to resist the dominant economy and fashion culture (Fiske, 1989), as we go about compositing our self-identity

(Baudrillard, 1969; Bourdieu, 1979, et al.). Veblen (*Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899) however, reduced consumption to “pecuniary emulation” obsessed with making “invidious distinctions”. He claimed that the leisure class set the standards for conspicuous consumption. When the masses emulated their style in any manner, they would change to remain out of range of the hoi polloi and therefore, forever on the forefront in fashions or style. “Veblen never considered that consumers might have other reasons for exercising choice in the marketplace. Possessions are definitions - meanings worth having. Meaning is what we are after. Most consumption is active; we are engaged. The paradigm of passive observer and active supplier, a receptive moron and smart manipulator, is easily transported to the marketplace; (yet at flea markets, the process of consumption is creative and even emancipating). We consume the real and the imaginary meanings, fusing objects, symbols, and images together. The search for meaning and consumption is the essential socializing event of modern life. Democracy is the right to buy anything you want”(Twitchell 1999, 283-287). Many individuals attempt to spend their way toward pleasure and happiness. In our consumer culture, it’s good to have; and the flea markets provide just such an opportunity for so many people with various means, tastes, and backgrounds.

Lastly, the feminization of the flea market itself increases its democratization. Not only are there women vendors as business owners, but women in public spaces with real economic power at the market. There is a ‘social logic’ of exchange (Baudrillard, 1969), and since women do much of the shopping (Miller, 1998), they have power at home and in the market place’ some say their second home, The

feminization of shopping has come a long way certainly since WWII, where women under patriarchal capitalism were confined to the home as mother, homemakers, and consumers. E. Zola (1883, trans. 1992) believes that the feminization and the marketplace itself, has actually elevated the role of women in business, and lessened the confines of domestication. Flea markets go beyond these themes. Feminism and the post-feminism dynamic within a social context, according to Miller (1998), “de-traditionalizes and constructs women outside the capitalist male oriented image. Both stress the rise of the single-person household (frequently female headed), the rise of divorce, the sheer diversity of modern household arrangements, and the decline of the tight normative structure of the nuclear family” (p. 7). Flea markets empower changing gender roles, afford new potential for equality, and welcome families of all types and structures without any stigma. Its excesses offers opportunities for a wide variety of behavior in the public sphere – parody, subversion, or inversion, role playing, the creation of new social meanings in doing business, and allowing for variations in patterns of consumption. The art of making do goes a long way at these two flea markets. It’s liberating, it empowers, it provides, and it is fun. In short, there is “the production of relevance and social rituals that harmonize social differences” (Fisk 1989, 7) within everyday life.

In summary, flea markets are inherently democratic. It might look like a shambles, kind of half-assed, but it really isn’t. This is a serious enterprise. Flea markets open up social as well as economic territories revealing “a profound rather than trivial development in human values and beliefs” (Miller 1998, 146). More than simple and mechanically imposed strictures postulating economic certainties from

above or as taken for granted axioms from the dominant economy, power is diffuse as the economic players are empowered in unique ways. There is sense that these are special, fun, adventurous, bargain-filled consumption sites that provide people with material and spiritual experiences involving fond memories of previous flea market experiences whether as a manufacturer/supplier, vendor, or shopper. This seems to encompass most age groups as there appears to be a shared commonality that we are all in this together in a collective community. Vendors and shoppers are from all races, ethnic heritages, and both sexes, and so are the shoppers. In dealing with manufactures/ suppliers willing to do business with flea market vendors, they seemed to have a more determinate background of being second and third generation of immigrants predominately from Europe with a major business background in the garment center. Doing business with flea markets was a source of revenue, an outlet for their merchandise and a chance to be part of the excitement generated by the flea market extravaganza. To reiterate, the flea market is the American melting pot in microcosm – this diversity becomes community, an alternative way to live.

Personhood and self-expression are endemic. People mix in ways that go beyond mere survival, or egotistical calculation. Flea markets are liberating in allowing so many an opportunity for more expansive lifestyles whether as vendors, consumers or as suppliers. “The anti-structural characteristic is the key both to the flea markets popular appeal and its socio-cultural significance. It generates alternative models for living that liberate our capacities from normative constraints and can influence behavior in the direction of radical change. Because it is explicitly contrasted with formal sector markets, because it has explicitly incorporated elements of these same

markets into itself, and because it explicitly subverts many of the canons of these markets, the flea market virtually demands that its participants question the nature of marketing and consumption in contemporary life”(Sherry 1990, 28). Many are trying to stretch the dollar, but have limited means to secure them. They look for cheaper venues to shop. Welcome, folks, to the flea market. Cash is king; people are noble, too.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The focus of the dissertation explained the workings of two specific highly successful, hugely popular flea markets that my family and I worked in for more than six years: Aqueduct and Roosevelt Flea Markets. We were in the thick of it – it was a terrific time in our lives. My first inclination was to stress the social/cultural aspects of “working the market,” an expression used by the majority of vendors. This expression however widely used, represents a reality that has simply been overlooked by much of economic theory. There is an artificial, academic divide that too often separates sociology from the study of the economy. Within markets, there is a mutuality and interaction between the cultural, social and economic interests and flea markets are no exception. What seems to have been considered unimportant or in fact inexplicable or beyond the purview for those using the paradigm of neo-classical economic theory, is a central theme of this dissertation – a more accurate, more inclusive analysis of these two flea markets operating in concrete complex reality. I developed a realistic understanding of how flea markets work as an unconventional economic institution by using a socio-cultural interactionist perspective; and therefore, proffered a better understanding of the workings of flea markets and their relationship to the cash underground economy. Three categories of economic participants were used in the analysis: manufacturer/suppliers who were

thriving in the cash underground economy, vendors as small entrepreneurs, and shoppers as consumers of not just products but the whole flea market experience.

Secondly, this work has added to the development of economic sociology by analyzing two specific marketplace sites and showing that the economics of these marketplaces were mediated and intertwined by socio-cultural realities. Therefore, a much more inclusive view was developed rather than an all-encompassing, one-size-fits-all theory as simply the neo-classical economic model that believes in the separation of the market from society as a priori; and therefore, presuming a historical certitude of a unitary development of markets in general. It is in this manner markets were supposed to emerge from a mechanical inevitability which flows from, a unitary template. In neo-classical economic theory the individual is the given and is presented as an irreducible unit of analysis – “Homo Economicus,” a mythical, typological construction of economic positivism armed with full knowledge, rationally calculating opportunities, preferences and advantages. Postulates suggesting a natural equilibrium and perfect allocation of resources attempt to describe a reality that is virtually non-existent in the business of flea markets and the wheeling and dealings of the cash underground economy which it is inextricably bound. Though long held sacrosanct as being useful in the interpretation of much of human behavior in the economic sphere, neo-classical economic theory needs to be redefined as it pertains to empirical, multifaceted, existential realities of flea markets and the business dealings of the informal or underground cash economy. It is too narrow in scope as it is presently construed. Social solutions such as sharing information, cooperation, trust, ethics, loyalty, ego gratification, and

satisfaction are major complements are an inherent part of flea market business/ activity in all three groupings: manufacturers/suppliers, vendors, and shoppers. These variables are a major part of the actual workings of flea market activity affecting and playing a major part in establishing value, to the development of lines of credit. Sharing information was widespread whether about business deals, opportunities, stories and antidotes, or a certain aspect one's life, and how it was related to buying and selling, or discussing possible changes in weather conditions are a wholesome aspect of flea market excitement. In this environment, there was competition as well as cooperation. The profit motive and its rationalities encourage a wide range of creativity, entrepreneurship and an infinitude business practices; so were enjoyment, satisfaction in buying and selling, and the thrill of being a part of it all. Embeddedness, a term popularized by Granovetter, was invaluable in realizing the complexities of market sites. Granovetter states: "The argument of embeddedness is the argument that the behavior and institutions to be analyzed are so constrained by ongoing social relations that to construe them as independent (from the influence of society and others) is a grievous misunderstanding" (1985, 481). Beyond a mere exchange site, flea markets perform the function of maintaining independence, dignity, empowerment, pluralism, and fun in society by creating and promoting entrepreneurship, creativity, individuality and equity. "Depending on the type of social milieu, informal economic activities will employ different modalities of exchange, each with different motivations and different expectations of return. These modalities will reflect the nature of the personal ties between participants, defined by norms and institutions that are in essence non-

economic” (Gaughan and Ferman 1987, 17). “The economy is rife with social connections” (Hefner 1998, 29). The dissertation concerned itself with how economic action is embedded in structures of social relations evolving in two specific flea marketplaces. I intended to construct a theory of action between the three major categories of economic participants, showing that it’s not just cash or cost transactions or even maximizing utility, as important as they are and they are, but from a social constructionist perspective, market transactions will lead to a more efficient outcome.”¹⁸ New postulates in economics or economic sociology must take into account the merits and the key role that moral values, social bonds, and individual proclivities, play in the lives of real economic actors.

Flea markets as ‘mini capitalism’ have a relationship to the dominant economy even in the post-industrial era. They flourish in the interstices between the dominant economy with its capital forms, and the cash underground economy and its alternative practices of conducting business. They are a viable economic institution – flourishing and ubiquitous; and provide an alternative to primary forms of retailing including: established malls, boutiques, chain stores and discount outlets.

A major draw and inducement for all three groups of economic participants discussed herein – manufacturer/suppliers, vendors, and shoppers- and a key ingredient for success is the essential characteristic of allowing a wide degree of personal expression in all aspects of marketing. In an industrial, post-modern, bureaucratic society with mass culture rationality oriented toward frequent sameness in commodities and homogeneity in behaving in most public spaces in civil society, flea markets by contrast radiate with possibilities. Flea markets offer alternatives

such as enchantment (by empowering individuals and enhancing shopping and business experiences), in a sometimes-disenchanted world. As an exchange site that determines value where there is at times commodity uncertainty, this public space situated on vast parking lots at racetracks, offers a sense of adventure, camaraderie, and a touch of the whimsical. The socio-cultural / interactionist perspective advances a more realistic assessment of the actual workings of these two flea markets and their connection to the cash underground economy uncovering many of the positive features of each. Breaking down the grand theory of markets with its abstractions and taken for granted generalities, I have used variables such as cultural influences (from politics to fashion), ethics, cooperation, empowerment, self-definition, and fun in both the flea markets as well as in the cash underground economy. Not just a critique of prevailing economic theory, but by offering insights as a counter-distinction to the positivistic axioms of neo-classical economic theory, I in part added to the development of economic sociology. A prime example is capital formation and social structure affecting the development of these two flea markets giving each a distinctive aspect – each with its own ideology and in some instances, taste. The social/cultural milieu is a meaning making medium and has affected the business aspects of each marketplace and the cash underground economy in a dialectical manner. The internal structures of the market were analyzed and related to the dynamics of a wide range of external business networks. Each affected the other as new and efficient structures emerge from the vast scale of human interactions, rather than flowing effortlessly from a single form. There is no justification for a single unified theory, which by definition lacks specific empirical details of a

marketplace site. This separates the reality of economic activity from social details such as labor concerns, community standards, zoning laws, and state policies. These two sites, as well as their location in the cash underground economy discussed within the dissertation, provide justification that there is cultural logic to capitalism that is mediated by a host of facilitated structures. It will add to a fuller sociological understanding of actual flea markets and the participation of economic actors.

Reiterating, “rather than being a sphere apart from economics, politics, and society, culture is a meaning-making medium that interacts with other forces to influence all social spheres, including economics” (Hefner 1998, 5). As an alternative view other than the concept of separate (with minimal outside interferences), more realistically, the concept of embeddedness was a source of providing a much richer understanding of the internal organization of these two flea markets from the original conception of racetracks for thoroughbred horseracing, to the idea of using parking lots as market sites. Furthermore, this eventually would help develop more profitably an informal underground cash economy, changing the thinking of business practices of many manufacturers/suppliers especially in the New York metropolitan and surrounding areas. Unpredictable as this might seem, human agency, cultural traditions, and the specifics of capital formation, combined with alternative consumption patterns, brought about a phenomenal success to flea markets in our society.

Notes

-
- ¹. *New York Times*, 9/27/04. A64.
 - ². *Daily News*, 10/6/80,63.
 - ³. Jon C. Teaford, historian, speaker at Hofstra University Conference on the Nassau County Centennial, 1999.
 - ⁴. *Long Island Courier*, 5/10/74, 59.
 - ⁵. Alfonso Morales, "Institutionalizing Informal Economic Resources: The Case of Property in Chicago's Maxwell Street Market," (Chicago, IL:1991), 1.
 - ⁶. Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, (London, England, 1978), 128.
 - ⁷. George Ritzer, (1999), *Enchanting a Disenchanted World-Revolutionizing the Means of Consumption*,) p. 1.
 - ⁸. *Ibid.*, ix.
 - ⁹. *Ibid.*, 36.
 - ¹⁰. Claudia Dreifus interviewing S. Marcus , "Talking Shop," *The New York Times Magazine*, 4/6/97, 82.
 - ¹¹. Richard Panek, "Superstore Inflation," *The New York Times Magazine*, 4/6/97, 67.
 - ¹². Paul Goldberger, "The Sameness of Things," *The New York Times Magazine*, 4/6/97, 56.
 - ¹³. Jo Hoffman, "Goodwill Hunting," *New York Magazine*, 41.
 - ¹⁴. Sol Tax, *Penny Capitalism*, 15.
 - ¹⁵. T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 72.
 - ¹⁶. *Ibid.*, 82.
 - ¹⁷. J. Baudrillard. (1960), "The Ideological Genesis of Needs," in *The Consumer Society Reader*, eds., J. Schor and D. Holt, p.68.
 - ¹⁸. James Coleman in an interview conducted by Richard Swedberg (1990) in *Economics and Sociology*, p. 54.

Bibliography

- Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. *The Social Life of Things*. Cambridge University Press.
- Baert, Patrick. 1988. *Social Theory in the Twentieth Century*. New York University Press.
- Barrett, William. 1962. *Irrational Man*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Baudrillard, J. *The Mirror of Production*. St. Lewis, Missouri: Telos Press.
- _____. 1981. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. Telos Press.
- Becker, Gary. 1976. *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*. University of Chicago.
- Bell, Daniel and Kristol, Irving. eds. 1981. in *The Crises Economic Theory*. New York Basic Books.
- Belshaw, Cyril. 1965. *Traditional Exchange in Modern Markets*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Bermant, Gordon, Peter Brown, Gerald Dworkin, eds. 1977. *Markets and Morals*. New York: Halsted Press Books.
- Block, Fred. 1990. *Postindustrial Possibilities, A Critique of Economic Discourse*. Los Angeles: Oxford University Press.
- Burt, Ronald. 1982. *Toward a Structural Theory of Action*. New York: Academic Free Press.
- Cetina, Karin. 1977. "Social Relations in Postsocial Knowledge Societies." *Theory, Culture and Society* 16 (4).
- Chin, Elizabeth. 1986. *Purchasing Power: Black Kids and America Consumer Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cross, John. 1998. "Street Vendors in the Postmodern World." *Informal Cyberspace*. p.1.
- DeCaro, Frank. 1997. "Looking for an Outlet," *New York Times Magazine*, April 6 – section 6. pgs. 70-75.
- Dreifus, Claudia. 1997. "Talking Shop," *New York Times Magazine*, April 6 – section 6 p. 82.

- Durkheim, Emile. 1964. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Free Press.
- Elster, Jon. 1989. *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- The Encyclopedia of New York City*. 1995. The New York Historical Society. Yale University Press.
- Etzioni, Amitai. 1988. *The Moral Dimension-Toward a New Economics*. New York: Free Press.
- Fine, Gary and Sherry Kleinman. 1978. "Rethinking Subculture: An Interactionist Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 85 number 1.
- Fiske, John. 1989. *Reading The Popular*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Fligstein, Neil. 1996. "Markets as Politics: A Political-Cultural Approach to Market Institutions." *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 61 – August, pgs. 656-673.
- Ford, Les. 1964. *The Harness Horse*. N. Y. Racing Association, Vol. 29 #42.
- Gaughan, Joseph and Louis Ferman. 1987. "Toward an Understanding of the Informal Economy." *AAPSS*, 493, September.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1963. *Peddlers and Princes*. University of Chicago Press.
- _____. 1973. *Interpretations of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- _____. 1979. *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society*. Mildred Geertz and Lawrence Rosen. Cambridge University Press.
- _____. 1983. *Local Knowledge*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gergen, Kenneth. 1969. *The Psychology of Behavior Exchange*. Reading Massachusetts. Addison-Wesley Co.
- Goldberger, Paul. 1997. "The Store Strikes Back," *New York Times Magazine*, April, 6 – section 6. pgs. 45-49.
- _____. 1997 "The Sameness of Things," *NYT. Magazine*, April, 6 – section 6. pgs. 56-61.
- Granovetter, Mark. 1985. "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 91 Nov. pgs. 481-510.

- Granovetter, Mark and Richard Swedberg. eds. *The Sociology of Economic Life*. Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press.
- Handelman, David. 1997. "The Billboards of Madison Avenue," *New York Times Magazine*, April 6, section 6 – pgs.50-54.
- Haskell, Thomas and Richard Teichgraber III. 1993. *The Culture of the Market*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hadrick, Celeste. 1988. *Newsday*. "Nassau County Last Large Underdeveloped Tract of Industrial Property," p. A33.
- Handelman, David. 1997. "The Billboards of Madison Avenue," *New York Times Magazine*, April 6, section 6 – pgs. 50-54.
- Hausman, Daniel M. 1992. *The Inexact and Separate Science of Economics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hechter, Michael. eds. 1983. *The Microfoundations of Macrosociology*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Heertje, A. and J. Mooregate and H. Cohen. eds. 1982. *The Black Economy: How It Works, Who Owns It and At What Costs*. London: Pan Books.
- Hefner, Robert. eds. 1998. *Market Cultures*. Boulder, Colorado and Oxford, England Westview Press.
- Hirschman, Albert O. 1982. "Rival Interpretations of Market Society: Civilizing, Destructive, or Feeble?" *Journal of Economic Literature*, 20 (4): 1463-1484.
- Hodder, W.B. and I. U. Ukwu. 1969. *Markets in West Africa*. Bombay: Ibadan University Press.
- Hodgson, Geoffrey. 1988. *Economics and Institutions: A Manifesto for a Modern Institutional Economics*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hogarth, Robin M. and Melvan Reder. eds. *Rational Choice –The Contrast Between Economics and Psychology*. University of Chicago Press.
- Holis, Martin and Edward J. Nell. 1975. *Rational Economic Man: A Philosophical Critique of Neo-Classical Economics*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Kabra, Karnah N. 1982. *The Black Economy in India – Problems and Politics*. Delhi, India: Chabnanya Publications.

- Keita, L. D. 1992. *Science, Rationality, and Neoclassical Economics*. Newark, N.J. University of Delaware Press.
- Klamer, Arjo and Donald N. McCloskey and Robert M. Solow. eds. 1988. *The Consequences of Economic Rhetoric*. New York University Press.
- Klaffke, Pamela. 2003. *Spree – A Cultural History of Shopping*. Vancouver, Canada: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Kopytoff, Igor. 1980. "The Cultural Biography of Things," in A. Appadurai. *The Cultural Life of Things*. Cambridge University Press.
- Leibenstein, Harvey. 1976. *Beyond Economic Man*. Cambridge, MA.:Harvard University Press.
- _____. 1981. "The Microeconomics and X-Efficiency Theory," in Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol, *The Crises of Economic Theory*. New York: Basic Books.
- Loughlin, Richard, M. ed. 1991. *Morality, Rationality and Efficiency – New Perspectives in Socio-Economics*. New York and London: M. E. Sharpe, Inc.
- Lukes, Steven. 1970. "Some Problems About Rationality," in *Rationality*. ed. by Bryon Wilson. New York: Harper and Row.
- Maisel, Robert. 1974. "Flea Market Action Scene." *Urban Life and Culture*. vol. 2, No. 4, January. pgs. 488-505. Sage Publications.
- McCree. 1984. "Flea Market," *Psychology Today*. 18 (3). pgs. 47-53.
- Miller, Daniel. 1998. *A Theory of Shopping*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Miller, S. M. 1987. "The Pursuit of Informal Economies," in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 493. pgs. 26-35.
- Mintz, Sidney. "Internal Market Systems as Mechanisms for Social Articulation," in the proceedings of the 1959 Annual Meeting of the American Ethnological Society.
- Monga, G. and V. J. Sanctis. 1984. *The Unsanctioned Economy in India*. Bombay India: Himalaya Publishing Co.
- Morales, Alfonso. 1991. "Institutionalizing Informal Economic Resources: The Case of Property in Chicago's Maxwell Street Market," ABF Working Paper #9125. Northwestern University – American Bar Association, Chicago, IL.

- Pahl, Raymond. 1987. "Does Jobless Mean Workless? Unemployment and Informal Work." in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 493. pgs. 37-46.
- Panek, Richard, "Superstore Inflation," *New York Times Magazine*, April 6, 94 pgs. 67-69.
- Polanyi, Karl. 1944. *The Great Transformation*. Boston, Ma.: Beacon Hill Press.
- Ray, Verne. 1959. *Intermediate Societies, Social Mobility and Communication*. American Ethnological Society. University of Washington.
- Ritzer, George. 1999. *Enchanting a Disenchanted World-Revolutionizing the Means of Consumption*. Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press.
- Rivlin, Leanne G. 1986. "The Study of Found Public Spaces," The Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1976. *Culture and Practical Reason*. University of Chicago Press.
- Schor, Juliet B. and Douglas B. Holt. 2000. *The Consumer Society Reader*. New York: The New York Press.
- Sen, William K. 1981. *Newday*. August 2, pgs. 1-2.
- Sherry, John F. 1990. "Sociocultural Analysis of a Midwestern American Flea Market," *Journal of Consumer Research*. Vol. 17. June.
- _____. 1990. "Dealers and Dealing in a Periodic Market: Informal Retailing in Ethnographic Perspective." *Journal of Retailing*. Vol. 66. No. 2. Summer.
- Simon, Herbert. 1979. *Models of Thought*. New Haven CT.: Yale University Press.
- Smelser, Neil. 1976. *The Sociology of Economic Life*. Englewood Cliffs New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Smith, Charles. 1981. *The Mind of the Market*. United Kingdom: Groom Helm.
- _____. 1989. *Auctions*. London and New York: Free Press.
- Smith, Robert H. T. ed. 1978. *Market Place Trade-Periodic Markets, Hawkers, and Traders in Africa, Asia and Latin America*. The Center for Transportation Studies. Vancouver, Canada: University of British Columbia.
- Soiffer, Stephen S. and Gretchen Herrimann. 1987. "Visions of Power: Ideology and Practice in the American Garage Sale." *Sociological Review* (1) pgs. 48-63.

- Swedberg, Richard. 1990. *Economy and Society*. Princeton University Press.
- Tax, Sol. 1963. *Penny Capitalism*. University of Chicago Press.
- Thass-Thienemann, Theodore. 1968. *Symbolic Behavior*. New York: Washington Press.
- Teaford, Jon. *Newsday*. Newsday Inc.. 3/10/99. p. A20.
- Tool, Marc. 1986. *Essays in Social Value Theory-A Neoinstitutionalist Contribution*. New York, Inc.
- Twitchell, James. 1999. "Two Cheers for Materialism," in *The Consumer Society Reader*. eds. Juliet Schor and Douglas Holt. New York: The New Press.
- Underhill, Paco. 1999. *Why We Buy-The Science of Shopping*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Uzzi, Brian. 1996. "The Sources and Consequences of Embeddedness for the Economic Performance of Organizations: The Network Effect." *American Sociological Review* vol. 61. August: 674-698.
- Veblen, Thorstein. 1899, 1934. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Random House.
- White, Harrison C. 1981. "Where do Markets Come From?" *American Journal of Sociology*. Volume 87 Number3, pgs. 517-547. University of Chicago Press.
- Williamson, Oliver E. 1975. *Markets and Hierarchies: Analysis and Antitrust Implications*. New York: Free Press.
- _____. 1981. "The Economics of Organization: The Transactional Cost Approach." *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 87 Number 3 pgs. 548-578. University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, Bryan R. 1970. *Rationality*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Wolff, R. and S. Resnick. *Economics, Marxian versus Neo-Classical Economic Theory*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Zelizer, Viviana. 1994. *The Social Meaning of Money*. Princeton University Press.
- Zukin, Sharon and Paul Diamaggio. 1990. *Structures of Capital, Social Organization of the Economy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.