

BARGAIN THEATER: A DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS OF A FLEA MARKET

Except where reference is made to the work of others, the work described in this thesis is my own or was done in collaboration with my advisory committee. This thesis does not include proprietary or classified information.

Allison Kay Medlin

Certificate of Approval:

Greg Kowalski
Professor
Sociology

Joseph Molnar, Chair
Professor
Agricultural Economics and
Rural Sociology

Raj Mohan
Professor
Sociology

George T. Flowers
Interim Dean
Graduate School

BARGAIN THEATER: A DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS OF A FLEA MARKET

Allison Kay Medlin

A Thesis

Submitted to

the Graduate Faculty of

Auburn University

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the

Degree of

Master of Science

Auburn, Alabama
August 9, 2008

BARGAIN THEATER: A DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS OF A FLEA MARKET

Allison Kay Medlin

Permission is granted to Auburn University to make copies of this thesis at its discretion, upon request of individuals or institutions and at their expense. The author reserves all publication rights.

Signature of Author

Date of Graduation

THESIS ABSTRACT

BARGAIN THEATER: A DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS OF A FLEA MARKET

Allison Kay Medlin

Master of Science, August 9, 2008
(B.A., Auburn University, 2004)

112 Typed Pages

Directed by Joseph Molnar

More than five thousand flea markets are conducted each year in the United States alone (Karch, Andriola and Berman 2002). Of those five thousand plus, little is known of their visitors, their vendors, their management, their behind-the-scenes operations and other features of social and economic importance. Flea markets are, therefore, an untapped resource of insight into human behavior of sociological significance. Much can be learned of social interaction through the scope of the flea market setting, but little has been researched thus far. For the purpose of this thesis, the Lee County Flea Market was observed and analyzed employing Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy, a perspective that utilizes the metaphor of drama and theater to interpret human behavior in everyday life (Turner and Edgley 1976). Through this dramaturgical analysis, this thesis

elicits: The types and functions of social interaction found in the flea market setting, in hopes of gaining new insight into patterns of social interaction of everyday life.

Style manual or journal used: *American Sociological Association*

Computer software used: Microsoft Word 2003

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
II.	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH	11
	Part I: Previous Research on Flea Markets	
	Part II: Conceptual Models of Flea Market Processes	
III.	METHODOLOGY.....	63
IV.	ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	71
	Part I: Observations of the Lee County Flea Market	
	Part II: Dramaturgical Applications to Flea Market Processes	
V.	CONCLUSION.....	94
	REFERENCES.....	103

I. INTRODUCTION

The flea market phenomenon is as old as recorded history. More or less a refined system of ancient trade and barter, for centuries merchandise has been bought and sold in communal marketplaces. Produce and domestic stock were sold in the open-air markets of ancient Mesopotamian regions, early Greek and Roman artists sold their masterpieces in city squares (Copeland 1977), and during the Middle Ages towns all across Europe hosted weekly markets for the sale of secondhand goods (Karch, Andriola and Berman 2002). The actual term, flea market, however, did not emerge until the late 1800's.

Signifying "an organized group of merchants who [came] together for a day, a weekend, or a week to offer their goods to the public" (Karch et al. 2002: 8), the term flea market was coined as a result of the insect-ridden furniture, clothing and other merchandise of early Parisian marketplaces. The world's pioneer flea market, Saint-Ouen Marche aux Puces, literally translated "Market of Fleas," located north of the great city wall of Paris, "served as a place where ragpickers brought items to sell that they had either picked up off the streets or gleaned from their daily rummaging through trash cans in the city" (Miller 1988: 55).

Not much modified from its historical roots, the modern flea market may be defined as "an occasion specially designated for the purpose of exchanging a wide variety of goods, from valuable antiques to backyard junk, from farm-fresh produce to handicrafts to brand-new, mass-produced merchandise" (House of Collectibles 1987: 1).

The basic function, then, of any flea market, whether ancient or modern, is a forum for sellers to disburse their goods or services to buyers who are able to find a use for them (House of Collectibles 1987).

The birth of the modern American flea market began in 1956 in the town of Salisbury, Connecticut (Copeland 1977). It was here that original flea market entrepreneur, Russel Carrell, conceived the idea of bringing together antique dealers from across the country to sell their merchandise to a general audience from one centralized location (Copeland 1977). Since Carrell's pioneer market, "more than five thousand flea markets are held each year in the United States" alone (Karch, Andriola and Berman 2002: 9).

From these humble beginnings, the modern American flea market is a "bit of a mongrel, with its Old World mixed parentage combined with that peculiarly American flare for the entrepreneurial" (Werner 2002: 5). Grown to proportions not even dreamed of by nineteenth-century marketers, mega-markets (such as the Rose Bowl Flea Market in Pasadena, California and the First Monday Trade Days in Canton, Texas) are still easily able to recall the days when such large, professionally-organized markets, attracting thousands of buyers a day, were nothing more than far-fetched and grandiose ideas (House of Collectibles 1987).

The growing popularity of flea markets, large and small, in both rural and urban regions, suggests that this mode of commerce has become a "welcome and permanent part" (Werner 2002: 5), of American culture. People from every walk of life, every age, class and ethnicity, "have taken to flea market shopping with zeal, giving rise to a subculture of avid collectors who have turned 'going to the flea' into a national pastime"

(Tolley and Mead 1998: 10-11). This new subculture views the flea market as an alternative to conventional shopping. Instead of the traditional suburban mall, the flea market buyer has the option of a “place where the individual buyer is on equal terms with the individual dealer, where no prices are fixed and the fun comes in finding just what you want and buying or selling it for a price that feels right” (Werner 2002: 6).

Of this growing phenomenon, little is known of flea market visitors, vendors, management, behind-the-scenes operations and other aspects of social and economic importance. Little is known of the flea market structure, societal influence and future prospects. Flea markets are, therefore, an untapped resource of insight into human behavior of sociological significance. Much can be learned of social interaction through the scope of the flea market setting, but little has been researched thus far. Significant investigation produced only a few research projects pertaining to the study of the flea market setting and only three were specific to the direction of this thesis.

First, H. Max Miller (1988) of the University of Georgia published a paper which highlighted a qualitative study of yard sales and flea markets located “along Highway 441 from Athens, Georgia to the North Carolina state line” (56). For the purpose of his research, Miller utilized the ethnographic approach of personal interviewing. “A total number of sixty-three yard sale and flea market dealers were approached and interviewed during the Spring, Summer and Fall of 1986” (Miller 1988: 57), with follow-up interviews conducted in 1987. Casual conversation as well as interview topics centered around three areas of interest: 1) “The dealer or seller of yard sale and/or flea market commodities as an occupational type. 2) The nature of merchandise being sold. And, 3)

The nature of interaction found in the market setting” (Miller 1988: 56). A result of this research, Miller (1988) derived several significant findings:

- 1) There is a niche or place for this type of exchange in American society and this is aptly demonstrated by the amount and diversity of exchange activity that exists outside of institutional retail structures. It offers a place where buyers with limited resources can obtain serviceable goods (59).
- 2) The degree of activity in this medium of exchange demonstrates the need for the humanization of the market process in American society which has been more or less dehumanized by self-service and mass marketing (59).
- 3) Exchange activity at this level satisfies a number of different needs; i.e. a market for used and unwanted goods, an off-the-record informal cash exchange that yields obvious benefits to both parties and offers a network of contacts through which secondary benefits are realized. It also has recreational benefits for both the buyers and sellers, especially for those who are retired or not connected to the formal economy (59).

Second, in 1993 Mary B. LaLone, Elizabeth Godoy, Diane Halsall and Deanna Matthews of Radford University presented a relevant paper at the Appalachian Studies Association Conference. “Inspired by Rhoda Halperin’s (1990) study of flea marketing

in the Appalachian region of Kentucky, [this] project examined the growing phenomena of flea marketing in the New River Valley region of Appalachia” (LaLone, Godoy, Halsall and Matthews 1993: 2), specifically the Dublin Flea Market. This qualitative study utilized four methods of data collection: mapping of the marketplace, personal interviews with flea market vendors, the role of participant-as-observer and extensive complete participation by the renting of a vendor booth and experiencing flea market selling firsthand. The study began in the Fall of 1991, with mapping of the marketplace and personal interviews. In the Spring and Fall of 1992, researchers utilized both roles of participant-observation in addition to extended mapping and interviewing. A result of this research, the authors cited that “the world of the flea market was transformed from one of seeming chaos, to a social and economic arena in which a variety of types of vendors operate with patterned behaviors” (LaLone et al. 1993:3). In addition, the authors showed “the flea market to be a highly complex arena of social and economic interactions, involving different types of vendors (wholesalers, dealers, and marketers), who employ definable economic strategies and adhere to recognized social norms” (LaLone et al. 1993: 3).

Third, John F. Sherry, Jr. (1990) of Northwestern University published a paper which explored the “institutional complexity and sociocultural significance” (13) of the Dalton Valley Flea Market in rural Mt. Arden. For the purpose of his research, Sherry (1990) utilized the “ethnographic approaches of participant observation and both directive and nondirective interviewing” (15). In this extended case study Sherry (1990) spent over three years, from 1984 to 1987, “shop[ing] with consumers, [selling] with dealers, [making] rounds with managers and regulators” (15), and interviewing “hundreds

of buyers, sellers and ancillary actors” (15). Sherry’s (1990) research focused primarily on “the relationship of primary and secondary economic activity, buyer and seller behavior, marketplace ambience, the social embeddedness of consumption and experiential aspects of consumption” (13). A result of this research Sherry (1990) advanced “a conception of marketplace structure and function that incorporates informal and festive dimensions of consumer behavior” (13). Sherry’s (1990) “concept of dialectical simultaneity captures the complexity of marketplace behavior” (16) and is described as follows:

I envision much marketplace structure and function as experienced by consumers to unfold along the dimensions of two dialectics. The structural dimension is represented by the formal-informal dialectic; the functional dimension is represented by the economic-festive dialectic. In conventional sociological and anthropological perspective, formal structure is characterized as official, controlled, highly rationalized, proactive, and institutional, and informal structure is viewed as less official (often clandestine), less controlled, less rationalized, reactive, and transient in nature. Informal patterns are thought to arise in response to or in spite of their formal counterparts. Functions may be similarly contrasted; an economic function is characterized by notions of rationality and utility, and a

festive function is hedonic and experiential in nature. Although these dialectics are inherent in all marketplace behavior, it is possible to characterize marketplaces by their dominant dialectical dimensions, as I have done. In particular, it removes marketplace behavior from the unproductive either/or conceptualizations characteristic of much current paradigmatic dispute, and places it directly into the kind of both/and framework demanded by postmodern inquiry (15-17).

Although not relating to the specific direction of this thesis, there are two additional research projects pertaining to the study of the flea market setting which should be mentioned. First, H.C. White (1981) of the University of Chicago published a paper which explored “economists’ neoclassical theory of the firm within a sociological view of markets” (518). Through his quantitative research White (1981) denoted three kinds of markets and market failures assuming production markets have two sides, producers and buyers. White (1981) further explained that “producers are a fully connected clique transacting with buyers as a separate but aggregated clique. Each producer is a distinctive firm with a distinctive product. Each side continually monitors reactions of the other through the medium of a joint social construction, the schedule of terms of trade” (517). A result of this research, White (1981) concluded that “markets are tangible cliques of producers observing each other. Pressure from the buyer side creates a mirror in which producers see themselves, not consumers” (543-544). Second, Marcel Fafchamps and Bart Minten (2001) published a paper which drew a unique

connection between liberalized grain markets in Madagascar and American flea markets. In this research project Fafchamps and Minten (2001) directly explored “whether institutions exist in present-day Madagascar that protect property rights and ensure contract compliance among grain traders” (229), but they inadvertently discovered that this type of trade had “little in common with the sophisticated business world that proponents of market liberalization typically envision[ed]” (231). “With little or no forward contracting, no brand recognition and no returns to scale in distribution” (231), the authors found these grain markets to “bear greater resemblance to American flea markets” (231). In addition, Fafchamps and Minten (2001) found the greatest similarity in these two marketplaces to be how contracts were enforced “and found that the dominant contract enforcement mechanism [in both was] trust-based relationships” (257). They found that this trust-based relationship was established “primarily through repeat interaction” (257), as is the driving force of success in the American flea market economy.

The data collection processes of the first three relevant studies constitute the framework in which research for the purpose of this thesis was conducted. The Lee County Flea Market was investigated using participant-observation, the methodological approach most commonly used in the practice of field research. Uncontrolled and unobtrusive participant-observation was employed through the role of complete-participant. Any individual present in the flea market setting (flea market buyer, flea market seller, flea market manager) during an observation day was anonymously observed as part of the participant population.

Data collected was validated against concepts of Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy, a methodology that utilizes the metaphor of drama and theater to interpret human behavior in everyday life (Turner and Edgley 1976). The validation of these concepts using a dramaturgical analysis elicited significant findings to the research problem: The types and functions of social interaction found in the flea market setting, in hopes of gaining new insight into patterns of social interaction of everyday life. This dramaturgical analysis was the foundation upon which all sociological conclusions and recommendations for future research were based.

There were three main objectives of this thesis: 1) To provide general information about the flea market phenomenon. 2) To demonstrate the flea market setting's research potential in the social sciences. And, 3) To further investigate Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy and its application prospective, particularly in a social setting which has not been investigated in this way before.

In the flea market setting, four research questions guided participant-observation:

- 1) Does the concept of a dramaturgical performance exist in the flea market setting? Which features of this performance are utilized? And does this performance adhere to the five stages of development set forth by Goffman (Idea Formulation, Selection/Creation of an Action Area or Stage, Recruitment of Actors, Enactment and Redefinition of the Situation)?
- 2) Does the concept of a dramaturgical region (or regions) exist in the flea market setting? Which regions are represented (Front Region, Back Region and/or Residual Region)? Where are these regions located? And which features of these regions are utilized?
- 3) Does the concept of a dramaturgical discrepant role exist in the flea market setting? For what purpose are these discrepant roles formed? Who

performs each role? And what functions do they serve? And, 4) Does the concept of dramaturgical impression management exist in the flea market setting? Which features of this concept are utilized and how (Defensive Measures and/or Protective Measures)?

Chapter 2, Conceptual Framework and Context for the Research, contains two parts: Part I, Previous Research on Flea Markets, consists of a review of relevant literature pertaining to the flea market phenomenon in general. Information provided was derived from a number of flea market guidebooks and handbooks published over the last thirty years. This section details: various types of flea market settings, the profiles of flea market buyers and flea market sellers, merchandise found in the flea market setting and how it is procured, the process of bargaining, strategies employed by flea market buyers and flea market sellers, as well as characteristics of social interaction found in this type of setting. Part II, Conceptual Models of Flea Market Processes, consists of a review of relevant literature pertaining to Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy. Information provided was derived from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). In this section, Goffman's six themes of dramaturgical analysis are detailed: performance, team, regions and region behavior, discrepant roles, communication out of character, and arts of impression management.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH

PART I: Previous Research on Flea Markets

Types of Flea Market Settings

Of the five thousand plus flea markets that exist in the United States today, no two are exactly alike. Each flea market differs greatly from the next and possesses distinctive characteristics (size, location and amenities offered) which make it unique to its own. “A flea market may range in size from just a few sellers standing on the side of a highway trying to clean out the unwanted contents of their homes to a complex, labyrinthine structure of [sellers’] booths sprawled out across acres of open space indoors or outdoors or both” (Werner 2002: 6). Needless to say, flea market settings are a stratum of sizes, existing on a continuum.

In measuring the approximate size of a flea market setting two factors must be considered: area in terms of distance and the number of sellers present. The area in terms of distance of any flea market setting will vary based upon the popularity of flea markets in that region and open space available. For instance, in New York City, where open space is extremely limited, small, forty-seller or less flea markets are held weekly in vacant parking lots across the city. On the other hand, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama host an annual flea market/yard sale that runs 450 miles along Route 127 incorporating thousands of sellers. Although there exist exceptions to any rule, for the most part, larger flea markets tend to be located in more rural regions, while smaller flea

markets tend to be located in urban, more densely populated regions. The size of a flea market may also vary greatly from the next based upon the number of sellers present on any given day. A flea market that hosted five hundred sellers one weekend, might only host two hundred the next. Seller counts vary according to “the day of the week, the weather, the time of year, local customs--and such unpredictable variables as new market openings” (Copeland 1977: 120-121). Seller populations in particular, but also flea markets in general, are an extremely dynamic phenomenon. The size of any given flea market may change radically from one day to the next and from one year to the next. According Copeland (1977), a successful flea market can be achieved with as few as twenty-five sellers, but an average flea market should host at least fifty.

Possibilities are limitless of location sites for flea market settings. Across the country, flea markets of all sizes may be located in “school gymnasiums, community centers, circus tents” (Karch et al. 2002: 9), “halls, hotels, motels, churches, parking lots, open fields, lawns” (Copeland 1977: 107), empty buildings, “drive-in movie theaters, sports arenas, race tracks, [and] every nook and cranny possible” (Copeland 1977: 120). Flea markets of all sizes can be grouped into two categories based on location: indoor or outdoor and rural or urban. While the size of a flea market is most likely based upon its location in either a rural or urban region, its location either indoors or outdoors has no apparent bearing on its size. Furthermore, based upon both climate and season, any given flea market may transform from outdoor to indoor or vice versa within the same year or even the same month. As a point of interest, based upon research conducted by Bohigian (1981), it is shown that outdoor flea markets are more widely popular with both seller and buyer populations than more commercial, indoor flea markets.

In addition to size and location, flea market settings may also vary greatly based upon the amenities offered by flea market management. To attract both seller interest and larger buyer crowds, flea market managers might offer such amenities as: restrooms, phones, food concessions, air-conditioning/heating, ample parking, free parking, free admission, security guards, paved aisles, handicap accessibility, advertisement and seller supplies, such as tables or booths.

Flea Market Buyers

Flea market buyers now number well into the millions each year. Some may attend just once out of sheer curiosity. Others may attend nearly every day. Some attend to casually browse, while others are more serious shoppers. One of the most unique features of the flea market buyer population is their diversity. Within the same flea market setting on any given day, there may be buyers of all ages, races, ethnicities, religions, educational levels and income backgrounds. This diversity is one of the key components to flea market successfulness.

According to Tolley and Mead (1998: 15), flea market buyers “can generally be separated into two groups: collectors obsessed with finding new additions to their ever-expanding personal collections and those who simply enjoy the chase and consider any find a wonderful bonus.” Similarly, in interviews conducted with over two hundred flea market buyers, Bohigian (1981) reports the “who” and “why” of flea market buyers. “Teenagers go ‘...to shop.’ Aficionados and collectors go to treasure hunt. The serious go to ‘...invest in quality.’ The carefree go ‘...to have fun and see what’s around.’ The bottom line for all is the bargain, the good buy, the unusual find. They differ only in what they consider to be a bargain, a good buy, or an unusual find, in what they will be

pleased to find” (Bohigian (1981: 236). All buyers, no matter their differences in shopping motivation, are most concerned with satisfying their “shopping desire,” which they actively pursue in the flea market setting.

Flea Market Sellers

Just as flea market buyers now number well into the millions each year, the number of flea market sellers has also been drastically increasing for the last several decades. For hundreds of years, thousands of flea market sellers have been providing valuable products and services to the general public. One might suggest, then, that the flea market seller is the last of the true entrepreneur, one who finds buyers for the useless to the elegant. Similar to flea market buyers, flea market sellers are an extremely diverse population. They represent men, women and children of all races, ethnicities, religions, educational levels and income backgrounds. Because of this diversity, flea market sellers are difficult to classify, as so many may fall into several categories.

According to Cooper (1988: 7-11), a flea market seller will typically fall into one of four categories per their reason for selling: 1) A portion of flea market sellers are employed full-time elsewhere during the work week and only sell at flea markets as a side job on the weekends. To these individuals, selling at the flea market supplies them with a secure extra income were they to ever be let go from their full-time employment. Selling at the flea market also serves a double purpose for these individuals in that they are able to earn additional income to support family luxuries. A few of these individuals are, however, only holding onto full-time employment elsewhere until their flea market business is successful enough to provide a sufficient living. 2) “A small percentage of professional [flea market sellers] are artists or craftsmen who sell their own creations”

(Cooper 1988: 7-11), either full-time or part-time, at various flea market locations. 3) A large segment of full-time flea market sellers are middle-aged men and women who were laid off from previous employment. These sellers most likely started selling at the flea market to supplement a livable income while out of work, but after seeing the monetary potential, decided to make flea market selling their new full-time career. 4) Remaining full-time flea market sellers are retirees who use selling at flea markets as a supplement to their retirement paycheck or as a way to defray the costs of traveling around the country.

Cooper (1988: 152) further differentiates between two more types of flea market sellers: day sellers and professional sellers. A day seller is one who is “usually just cleaning out his or her attic or garage and disposing of unwanted items” (Cooper 1988: 152). This type of flea market seller is extremely negotiable and is generally more concerned with getting rid of the unwanted items than making a large profit. On the other hand, a professional seller sells at flea markets for the sole purpose of making money. “Some are merely trying to supplement an already adequate retirement income. Others derive their entire living from selling” (Cooper 1988: 152), as mentioned previously.

Based upon field research conducted by LaLone et al. (1993), three types of flea market sellers can be found in most flea market settings: wholesalers, dealers and marketers. These three categories of sellers were created by the researchers based upon five criteria: merchandise sold, quantity of merchandise sold, process of procurement, amount of capital and labor invested and whether primary motivation for selling was

economic or social. Based upon extensive participant-observation and subject interviews, these characteristics were found to be typical of each type of flea market seller.

A “wholesaler” is a type of flea market seller who purchases wholesale merchandise in bulk quantity from either a factory or other retail source. At the flea market, these sellers “break the bulk, selling each piece individually at lower than retail prices” (LaLone et al. 1993: 3-4). Wholesalers tend to make a substantial capital investment up front, in order to procure such a large bulk quantity, and therefore, their prime motivation for selling is economic, to make a profit. In addition, wholesalers tend to be most concerned with accessibility to merchandise and making a larger profit by not bargaining or negotiating.

A “dealer” is a type of flea market seller one might call a “specialist.” Dealers focus primarily on one or two types of collectibles, antiques or handcrafted items. These individuals obtain such valuable merchandise items from “auctions, yard sales, estate sales and transactions with other dealers. Dealers tend to express a personal interest in their items and invest a significant amount of time and money into collecting, researching, buying and often fixing up their merchandise. Unlike wholesalers who rely on unloading the majority of their merchandise [quickly], dealers may hold onto their merchandise until the right customer appears” (LaLone et al. 1993: 4).

A “marketer” is a type of flea market seller who is not specialized, but sells a wide variety, or potpourri, of fairly low-cost items. These “hand-made crafts or second-hand items” (LaLone et al. 1993: 4-5), can be re-sold at very low prices for optimum profits. “Marketers obtain their merchandise from attics, garages, yard sales, dumpsters-- basically everywhere and anywhere they can find things to sell. Very little capital

investment is put into fixing up items to sell, although marketers may invest [a great deal of] time and labor in searching for their merchandise. Both monetary and social motivations draw the marketer [to the flea market]" (LaLone et al. 1993: 4-5).

Merchandise

As great as the diversity is among both flea market buyers and flea market sellers, even more diversity exists in the merchandise that these individuals buy and sell. By and large, flea market merchandise is limited only by one's own imagination. If someone can dream it up, make, buy, acquire or transport it, it can be sold (Copeland 1977)!

Although the possibilities seem to be endless, it should be noted that there do exist a few exceptions to what flea market sellers are allowed to sell. Many flea market managements prohibit the sale of food concessions because of the competition it would create to their own self-operated concession stands. Other exceptions may include: "produce, cigarettes, liquor, pornography" (Copeland 1977: 32), "guns, switchblade knives" (House of Collectibles 1987: 6), "drugs, explosives, ammunition, martial arts supplies, fireworks, pets, livestock and paramilitary paraphernalia" (Cooper 1988: 27).

Merchandise will vary greatly from market to market as well as from seller to seller. As mentioned earlier, some flea market sellers specialize in new, mass-produced merchandise while others concentrate more on antique or hand-crafted items. There are several merchandise items, however, of general popularity which can be found at almost any flea market across the country. Such items may include: "fresh produce, jewelry, tools, t-shirts, cassette tapes, brass figurines, cheap toys, watches, bumper stickers, posters, framed prints, used paperbacks" (Cooper 1988: 27-28), and countless others.

Two of the most important aspects of flea market selling successfulness is the quality and diversity of merchandise offered. In order to attract larger buyer populations as well as to keep regular buyer interest, a flea market seller must always be on the lookout for new and exciting items to be sold. Locating these new and exciting merchandise items is usually a long and tedious process, but the vast number of resources available makes it not an impossible feat.

Copeland (1977), Cooper (1988) and Bohigian (1981) have suggested several resources for merchandise procurement that might be utilized by flea market sellers. Free merchandise is the first. "The cheapest way to get merchandise for resale is to get it for free" (Copeland 1977: 52). This can first be accomplished by cleaning out one's own house, attic, garage or storage facility. After unwanted personal items have been collected, asking relatives, neighbors, friends, etc. if they possess items which they are willing to part with, is another possible option (Copeland 1977). When relatives, neighbors and friends have been utilized, begin with strangers. An excellent way to collect unwanted items from strangers is to place an advertisement in a local newspaper offering "free basement clean-up or junk-haul-away service" (Copeland 1977: 53-54). Basements, attics and garages can store a wealth of valuable flea market merchandise if one only has the time to search for and collect it (Copeland 1977: 53-54). Also included in local newspapers is the possibility of classified advertisements for "giveaway or freebie offers" (Bohigian 1981: 171). Many flea market sellers will venture to the streets to find discarded items before sanitation workers collect (Copeland 1977). Other flea market sellers will rummage through old buildings just before their scheduled demolition (Copeland 1977). There are even those who will hunt for flea market treasures in local

garbage dumps. If no local ordinance prohibits salvaging, dumpsters as well as dump sites may contain numerous salable items (Copeland 1977). Once free merchandise resources have been exhausted, flea market sellers will utilize these additional procurement methods: white elephant sales, rummage sales, bazaars and other events sponsored by churches, temples, historical societies and women's groups; garage sales, yard sales and tag sales; thrift shops; antique shops; other flea markets or swap meets; antique or collectible shows; auctions: estate auctions, consignment auctions, fundraising auctions, specialized auctions and bankruptcy auctions; consignment shops; wholesale gift shows; close-out and sample sales; shopping mall sidewalk sales; or the more "obscure resources": trade papers; bartering/trading with other sellers; obituary columns; canvassing house-to-house; importing/ordering from overseas; and buying/ordering by mail.

Bargaining

Flea markets, as with any kind of trade market, are characterized by "deals," made when both the seller and the buyer believe they are receiving the better bargain (House of Collectibles 1987). "Bargaining is not only part of the fun of flea market shopping" (Copeland 1977: 74), it is essential to the successfulness of the phenomenon. "Handled as a courteous exchange, or as an enjoyable game, bargaining does [not] demean either the buyer or the seller" (Copeland 1977: 74-75), but functions to aid each party involved into receiving the best buy or sale possible.

To best understand the "game" of bargaining it is first important to classify the various types of buyer bidders that might be found in a typical flea market setting. From extensive buyer interviews Bohigian (1981: 231), has classified flea market bidders into

three categories: the reluctant bidder, the intrepid bidder and the occasional bidder. Some adults, regardless of factors such as age, income and buying experience, feel hesitant or reluctant bargaining for a price, and will not, even though they may be tempted to do so. Teenagers are particularly hesitant to bargain out of a fear of appearing “cheap” and because they are accustomed to retail stores and the authority of a fixed price. A sharp seller will sense when a particular buyer is hesitant to bargain, yet unwilling to pay the marked price for a given item. If this seller is eager to make a sale, he or she might “offer the item to the reluctant bidder for slightly less than the stated price, and profitably close an otherwise non-existent deal” (Bohigian 1981: 231). Opposite of the reluctant bidder, the intrepid bidder is not only a flea market regular but is one who may feel “cheated” if he or she buys an item without undergoing the bargaining process. This type of bidder loves the negotiation process, “the pitting of ego against ego” (Bohigian 1981: 231), as it were. The intrepid bidder approaches a seller with the expectation of haggling and is dissatisfied if this does not occur. This type of bidder believes bargaining to be paramount to the flea market phenomenon and believes any seller who does not intend to bargain should not sell. To this type of bidder, bargaining is the reason for attending a flea market rather than just another retail store. Somewhere between the reluctant bidder and the intrepid bidder is the occasional bidder, a buyer who will not bargain unless the price is right. This type of bidder will only bargain for an item if he or she greatly desires the item or feels the seller’s price is too high.

The Editors of the House of Collectibles (1987: 3-5), suggest eight tips for flea market buyers who wish to bargain. First and foremost, a buyer should place a value on the item of interest and stick to that value as best as possible. “Changing [one’s] mind in

the middle of a sale is a sign of weakness and uncertainty” (House of Collectibles 1987: 3-5). Second, if an item is encountered which is not priced, a buyer should prompt the seller for his or her price, but not suggest one. “After all, it is the obligation of the seller to have a price to quote for any item that he [or she] sells” (House of Collectibles 1987: 3-5). Third, a buyer should never assume that the first price quoted is the final price, “whether offered by voice or by a price tag” (House of Collectibles 1987: 3-5). In fact, there is a “right as a potential buyer to ask for the last price” (House of Collectibles 1987: 3-5), before making up one’s mind. Forth, as a general rule, a buyer should “always be working towards a deal” (House of Collectibles 1987: 3-5), in their negotiations with a flea market seller. A potential buyer should not “ask for a price on an item unless genuinely interested” (House of Collectibles 1987: 3-5). Fifth, a buyer should also always be careful of their approach to bargaining. “Part of the trick is knowing the real value, of course. But even if something is already priced low, a deft haggler takes the position that it can be driven down much further” (House of Collectibles 1987: 3-5). Sixth, in the same manner, “the wrong way to ask for a discount is by deriding the merchandise or the price; by suggesting that the [seller] does not know his [or her] business; or by doing anything that could trigger a negative reaction” (House of Collectibles 1987: 3-5). Seventh, a buyer will also be keen to remember that sellers have already heard every possible ploy for a discount, many times the same ones over and over. A potential buyer should strive to be “original in trying to obtain a discount and above all, courteous” (House of Collectibles 1987: 3-5). And finally, buyers should utilize resources, be inventive, use their imaginations and “most importantly, make a good impression” (House of Collectibles 1987: 3-5). A buyer should always make sure

that the way in which he or she conducts business with a seller would welcome them back again.

Strategies Employed By Flea Market Buyers

As with any retail transaction in which money is changing hands, both the buyer and the seller will attempt to employ strategies which will ultimately give them the upper hand and better deal. Three general strategies are utilized by a majority of flea market buyers in their attempt to outwit sellers.

The first strategy that any flea market buyer should employ is to come prepared with the proper materials. According to Karch, Andriola and Berman (2002: 10), six items should accompany a serious buyer to the flea market: 1) Cash. (“Small bills [\$20 or smaller] are best” (Karch et al. 2002: 10). It will be difficult to bargain with a flea market seller for that lower price with an ample amount of large bill denominations in hand.) 2) Food and Water. (Not all flea markets are equipped with food concessions.) 3) Comfortable, Nondescript Clothing and Shoes. (A flea market buyer should keep in mind to not wear finer clothing and expensive jewelry or accessories. If one expects to bargain, it will be difficult to convince a seller of a discount wearing such fancy items.) 4) Packing Materials. 5) An Empty Car. And, 6) Tools. (Suggested “tools” include: flashlight, tape measure, magnet [to help determine the composition of a find], magnifying glass, receipt book and a reliable price guide.)

The second strategy that any flea market buyer should employ is to coordinate a “plan of attack.” Tolley and Mead (1998: 16-17), provide a step-by-step “plan of attack” to guide both new and experienced buyers into finding the best sales possible. First, if a buyer is looking for a particular item of interest or is a serious collector, he or she should

attend a “pre-show ‘early bird’ opening” (Tolley and Mead 1998: 16-17). If receiving the best price is of paramount importance, a buyer should attend only the last few hours of a flea market. A seller may be more willing to take less for an item at the end of a business day to avoid having to pack it up and tote it home. Next, it is suggested to walk the flea market in an organized or patterned manner, in order to insure no seller is overlooked. “Some [buyers] prefer to do a quick walk-through of the entire [flea market] before buying; others buy as they go” (Tolley and Mead 1998: 16-17). If a buyer should decide to buy as they go, they should pay for each item and ask the seller to hold onto it at his or her booth until the end of the business day. Finally, even if a buyer is looking for a very specific item, one should “look at booths that offer a potpourri of merchandise” (Tolley and Mead 1998: 16-17). Often the best prices will be found at these types of booths where the seller is less knowledgeable about his or her merchandise.

The third strategy that any flea market buyer should employ is to arrive early, just as the market is opening, or possibly hours before. While this strategy has numerous advantages, such as first pick at merchandise and beating larger crowds, it also has several disadvantages. Karch, Andriola and Berman (2002: 10), suggest that “contrary to conventional wisdom, there is no best time to arrive at a flea market. It is true that those who arrive the minute the venue opens will find the best selection of goods,” but many mistakes are to be made by employing this strategy. “Some of the worst mistakes are made by people shopping when it is still too dark to see clearly. Also, [sellers] may not be completely unpacked [at that time], and [will be] less inclined to bargain. They have the whole day before them and figure they will surely sell [that item] to someone else at the full asking price. As the day passes, prices become more flexible” (Karch et al. 2002:

10). Arriving later in the day, a buyer may find less merchandise to choose from, but much better prices. Therefore, a buyer's priority, whether merchandise selection or price, will determine their desired arrival time.

Strategies Employed By Flea Market Sellers

Since the beginning of the flea market phenomenon, flea market sellers have been devising strategies to earn optimal profits just as flea market buyers have been devising strategies to bargain for the lowest prices possible. These strategies have been passed on from generation to generation. To clarify, flea market seller strategies may be defined as "planned actions that individual [sellers] develop in order to maximize their economic and social involvement at the flea market. These strategies, by definition, involve planning and manipulation on the part of the [seller] in order to increase the chances of a sale" (LaLone et al. 1993: 5). Even though sellers tend to develop their own individual strategies based upon their unique merchandise or area of business, there do exist several commonalities used by the majority.

The first strategy employed by flea market sellers is to be thoroughly educated on all merchandise being sold. "This requires much research on the part of the [seller] in order to be able to recognize marketable merchandise, avoid misvaluing an item they plan to sell, and recogniz[e] items being sold at undervalued prices" (LaLone et al. 1993: 6). Education may be gleaned of one's own merchandise using several resources: visiting museums, fine antique stores and auction houses to study prices; reading trade show, collectible, antique and home magazines; and speaking with other flea market sellers of their experiences.

The second strategy employed has been previously discussed, the procurement of merchandise. This may be accomplished through outside sources such as tag sales, auctions, estate sales, thrift stores and the like, while much is bought and sold within the flea market setting, seller to seller.

Once merchandise has been researched and procured, sellers employ various strategies to “market themselves and their merchandise” (LaLone et al. 1993: 6). The third strategy utilized by flea market sellers is taking on an adverse facade from their everyday appearance to “dress down” and convey an image of being “unsuccessful or poor” (LaLone et al. 1993: 6). As mentioned earlier, “wealthier [buyers] have also picked up on this strategy and wear ‘disguises’ in order to” (LaLone et al. 1993: 6-7), strike better deals with sellers. These buyers realize that wearing finer clothing and expensive accessories will tip off flea market sellers to the fact that they do not, in actuality, need a discount, but are accustomed to and financially able to pay the full asking price, if not more (LaLone et al. 1993).

Accompanying “dressing down,” sellers will also “act down,” offering the fourth strategy. For instance, by not carrying themselves as if they were “successful” or enjoy a comfortable lifestyle, buyers will be less inclined to haggle with their asking prices, assuming that the seller needs the money (LaLone et al. 1993).

Fifthly, a majority of sellers will use tactics of persuasion to sell their merchandise. A flea market seller might sell “standing up” or be overly outgoing, striking up conversations with buyers as they pass by (LaLone et al. 1993).

The sixth strategy employed by flea market sellers is “display techniques.” Sellers “recognize that their items do not sell themselves and so utilize various display [or

merchandising] techniques” (LaLone et al. 1993: 7), to gain advantages on other competing booths. To gain both respect and credibility from flea market buyers as well as other sellers, a seller will strive to make his or her merchandise as easily accessible and aesthetically appealing as possible, creating an individualized image by having an attractive, eye-catching display (LaLone et al. 1993). For example, “some colors attract attention while others tend to blend into the background” (Cooper 1988: 44). Or in some cases, sellers will hang signs over their tables or booths indicating either a company name or the nature of merchandise being sold.

Three additional and similar strategies used by a few flea market sellers include the use of recyclable products and the combining and breaking-apart of resources. “To make their merchandise more appealing many [sellers] take advantage of recyclable resources, such as broken or aged items. They fix them, paint them, gloss them, polish them or whatever is necessary in order to improve their appearance and worth. By combining resources, the seller actually enhances his or her display and increases the chances of selling more merchandise. [Sellers] who ‘break sets’ resell individual pieces in order to receive the maximum amount possible for each” (LaLone et al. 1993: 7). This “breaking-apart” strategy is particularly popular because many buyers, especially other sellers, are forever looking for their “missing pieces” to complete a set.

Because the flea market setting offers a great deal of “seller freedom,” many “express their individuality [by creating] a ‘catch’ to sell their merchandise” (LaLone et al. 1993: 7). Such advertisements may range from “a theme, such as Disney memorabilia, to supporting a charitable cause, such as ‘Save the Dolphins’ or ‘Hurricane Relief.’ Serving a charitable cause attracts [buyers] and boosts sales because the [buyers]

will feel justified spending their money if they feel they are supporting a charitable cause. [In addition, sellers will] also try to advertise and sell new and unusual items to the region that would otherwise be scarce or completely unavailable, items that are unique and hand-crafted” (LaLone et al. 1993: 7), at the lowest prices possible.

The eleventh strategy employed by a vast majority of flea market sellers is to arrive extremely early, possibly hours before the flea market is set to open. No matter what merchandise is being sold, all sellers should be set-up and ready for business at least one hour before the opening of the market. There are four advantages of both arriving early and being prepared to sell early: First, getting the best spot is of utmost importance and “most flea market space is allotted on a first-come, first-served basis” (Copeland 1977: 35). Second, setting up carefully will allow a seller to arrange their booth, set up displays, review prices and organize thoughts for the day. Third, most selling to other sellers only takes place before the flea market officially opens. Arriving late, it will not be possible to receive a fair share of this business. And finally, buying from other sellers will also only be possible if set up ahead of schedule. If done so, a seller will be able, himself or herself, to collect a fair share of early morning bargains.

Just as flea market buyers are expected to come prepared with the proper shopping tools, sellers too, are expected to have certain supplies and materials furnished. Having “buyer-friendly” materials furnished may greatly increase return business for the flea market seller season after season.

The final and most important strategy employed by flea market sellers is the location of their space, booth or table, because where a seller is located is oftentimes more important than what he or she is actually selling. Most sellers would consider these

to be prime locations in any flea market setting: “near the main entrance, in a covered area, in a regular location” (LaLone et al. 1993: 8-9), “on a corner or at the end of a row with cross aisles, near a food concession, directly across the aisle from the entrance to the women’s restroom” (Cooper 1988: 71), or “in close proximity to parking” (Copeland 1977: 34). Of these prime locations three are especially coveted. “Having a space near the entrance makes the [seller’s] merchandise more readily available to arriving [buyers] who are eager to shop and find ‘hidden treasures.’ [Buyers] usually have something in mind to purchase before they get to the [flea market] and are more likely to buy the first bargain they see rather than the last. Covered areas give buyers shelter, and during bad weather the [seller may] greatly increase the exposure of his or her merchandise to a large number of potential buyers, while protecting their goods. Being in the same spot year after year makes the [seller] more memorable and subsequently available to [buyers] repeatedly. It also allows the [sellers] and [buyers] to get to know each other and form strong socioeconomic ties within and outside the [flea market]” (LaLone et al. 1993: 8). Competition for these prime locations is immense, “thus [sellers] may elicit strategies for obtaining and holding their spaces” (LaLone et al. 1993: 8). Space location is usually assigned on a first-come, first-served basis; however, spots can be reserved for those sellers who have seniority based upon selling in the same spot year after year. Most sellers, however, turn their profits immediately to reserve their space again for the next season. “Outside [sellers] can acquire [these coveted] spaces if they register for a slot very early in the year, become an apprentice to an experienced [seller] or if another [seller] does not renew his or her space” (LaLone et al. 1993: 8).

In any flea market setting “highly personalized relationships” develop between fellow sellers, and between sellers and buyers, especially if the buyers frequent the same seller’s spot season after season. “As with any repeat interaction between individuals and groups, certain norms, [or rules of conduct], that distinguish these relationships begin to emerge” (LaLone et al. 1993: 10). Norms, which may be defined as rules that regulate acceptable behavior in a culture, serve an extremely important function in any flea market setting. It may be suggested that these norms keep the flea market setting socially and economically “in check.” So in addition to employing selling strategies, flea market sellers must also abide by general rules of conduct or norms of the flea market setting.

LaLone, Godoy, Halsall and Matthews (1993) suggest that thirteen rules of conduct for flea market sellers exist. These rules of conduct seem to be “quietly understood in an almost unspoken manner” (LaLone et al. 1993) by a majority of regular sellers. 1) Once the merchandise’s asking price has been displayed, a seller should not raise or change this price, “although lowering [it] is fine, however” (LaLone 1993: 11). 2) A seller should be conscious of neighboring vendor merchandise and prices as to “not sell the same items for less than another [seller], especially if they are close in proximity or will be returning to the same spot the following year or season” (LaLone 1993: 11). 3) A seller should never “talk down” another seller or his or her merchandise to a fellow seller or buyer. 4) “Keep money matters quiet” (LaLone et al. 1993: 11), – a seller should never boast about how much money was made or about any other seller’s earnings. 5) “Trust exists” (LaLone et al. 1993: 11). A seller should be able to leave his or her booth in the safety of a neighboring seller should it need to be cared for. 6) Seller spaces, booths and tables “are designated by specific footage” (LaLone et al. 1993: 11),

and a seller should always remain within his or her bounds. “Any violation or infraction of space will likely result in a riff with a neighbor” (LaLone et al. 1993: 11). 7)

Appraising the value of a piece of merchandise to a buyer is not acceptable, although stating estimated values to another seller is. 8) “Mark-ups on items are expected, therefore bargaining over prices is acceptable, especially where monetary values are not necessarily fixed but fluctuate according to buyer demand” (LaLone et al. 1993: 11). 9)

Sellers should recognize that there exists an honor system that all sellers must adhere to. A certain percentage of a seller’s earnings is expected to be turned into flea market management at the end of each business day, per their contractual agreement. 10) It is understood that there exists “a sense of social responsibility not to take advantage of a [buyer’s] naiveté” (LaLone et al. 1993: 11). 11) “All sales are final” (LaLone et al. 1993: 11). A buyer will not be allowed to return to a seller to haggle for a better price if the item in question has already been purchased. 12) If a seller receives an asking price for an item, it will always be “a fair deal, even if the buyer makes a sizable profit by reselling the item” (LaLone et al. 1993: 11). And, 13) It is acceptable, and even encouraged, that sellers “set up reciprocal relationships with one another and regular buyers; meaning if a [seller] knows a repeat customer will be back to look at their goods the following season, he or she may purchase something to resell to this particular [buyer] or [fellow seller]. In a sense, this assures them of making some money, and furthers social relationships. This is especially true with [fellow sellers]” (LaLone et al. 1993: 11). It should be noted that not all sellers adhere to these rules of conduct; some are more inclined to do so than others. Those who do, however, realize that these norms “serve to moderate economic

behavior” as well as “facilitate a comfortable social environment for economic exchange” (LaLone et al. 1993: 12), within the flea market setting.

Social Interaction

It is apparent that the flea market phenomenon has created an American subculture. What drives this subculture is interaction, interaction between fellow sellers, interaction between fellow buyers, and most importantly, interaction between sellers and buyers. The interaction between these peoples’ social and economic worlds has shaped the flea market phenomenon into what it is today.

According to LaLone, Godoy, Halsall and Matthews (1993: 9-10), there exists five types of social interaction which help create the flea market “aura” as it were. Face-to-face interaction is the first. Personal, face-to-face interaction plays a tremendous role in flea market socialization. Flea markets have “a small town atmosphere, where people negotiate and interact on a fact-to-face basis. In the flea market, economic exchange is intermingled with social exchange and moderated by social norms” (LaLone et al. 1993: 9-10).

The building of relationships is the second. The building of relationships also plays a vital role in the various types of social interaction found in the flea market setting. A flea market “is used as a meeting place, and is composed of vast networks of social communication between those who visit it” (LaLone et al. 1993: 9-10). In many cases, sellers and buyers have been attending the same flea markets for decades and will for decades to come. “This regular visitation promotes the establishment of many different relationships” (LaLone et al. 1993: 9-10). Buyers befriend buyers. Sellers befriend sellers. And buyers and sellers befriend each other. In many cases, these friend

relationships reach beyond the flea market setting. The foundation for these relationships is influenced greatly by the flea market's "pervasive feeling of friendliness" (LaLone et al. 1993: 9-10). This atmosphere of friendliness helps to spur the blossoming of these long-lasting relationships.

Shared identity is the third. "A sense of shared identity exists in that" (LaLone et al. 1993: 9-10), if a person is at a particular flea market, either as a buyer or a seller, he or she automatically has a shared interest or hobby in common with every other person in attendance. To many, trips to the flea market are not made out of necessity, but are largely leisure activities. "This can be paralleled with marketplaces in non-industrial countries such as Latin America and Africa, where marketplaces are seen as social events and happenings, in addition to being economic arenas. Since they only occur at certain times, as opposed to being permanent structures, their occurrence invites a sense of anticipation people from other mainstream cultures may not quite understand" (LaLone et al. 1993: 9-10).

Social bonds is the fourth. The bartering and bargaining processes characteristic of the flea market setting encourages the type of personal interaction between buyers and sellers that provides a foundation upon which strong social bonds can be formed, which are not evident in the broader economy. For instance, by purchasing merchandise from a flea market seller, the buyer "feels appreciated, the smiles and thanks that the [seller] offers are sincere. Many times unless the patron frequents very small businesses, the transaction that occurs is not direct, in that there exists a middleman between the producer of the good and the buyer" (LaLone et al. 1993: 9-10). In experiencing a direct transaction with a flea market seller, a buyer will walk away from the seller's space

feeling satisfied, “both at having obtained a want or need, as well as having made the [seller] happy” (LaLone et al. 1993: 9-10).

And finally, there is collective identity. Drawing on the personal interaction processes characteristic of the flea market setting, a closeness between individuals becomes apparent, especially between fellow sellers who frequent the same flea market settings year after year. As a result, a collective identity begins to emerge between sellers in the form of a type of “seller family.” This collective identity is most clearly evidenced by sellers “being able to ask each other to keep an eye on their spots should they need to leave for a while” (LaLone et al. 1993: 9-10). When arriving at a row of seller spaces, because of this collective identity, it may be difficult for a buyer to determine which individual sells at which space. Numerous other scenarios of social interaction enrich the flea market setting, but only these specific five have been explored thus far.

PART II: Conceptual Models of Flea Market Processes

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Erving Goffman outlines a highly imaginative method of analyzing social interaction. Goffman uses a metaphorical theater as his theoretical framework. Within this framework, social interaction, specifically face-to-face interaction, involves individuals as actors performing for an audience in a scripted manner, while engaging in the art of impression management.

This framework, termed dramaturgy, is the central focus of Goffman's work on the self through the scope of the Symbolic Interactionist Perspective. Goffman's dramaturgical approach, therefore, shapes his sense of self and self-image. To Goffman, the self is not a possession of the actor, but rather the product of the dramatic and dynamic interaction between actor and audience (Ritzer 2004).

Goffman's dramaturgy is an expansion on the ideas of Kenneth Burke, who pioneered the "dramatistic" approach to social interaction involving five themes: act, scene, agent, agency and purpose (Ritzer 2005). Goffman developed his own "dramaturgical" approach, however, based on six themes: performance, team, regions and region behavior, discrepant roles, communication out of character and arts of impression management.

Performance

Any single instance of social interaction may be called a performance. For any instance of social interaction to become a fully developed performance, it must complete all five stages of development: 1) idea formulation (in the form of an image, theme, plot or script), 2) selection/creation of an action area or stage, 3) recruitment of actors and training for roles, 4) enactment and 5) a new definition of the situation for actors and audiences (Hare and Blumberg 1988).

Goffman suggests that any performance, including a theatrical one, must begin with an idea. This idea will concern a situation, as well as the action that will consequently unfold in response to that situation. An idea may be one of two kinds: a single image that has the potential for action or a detailed script, as in a play, which includes both parts for each cast member as well as stage directions to guide the performance. A single image is more likely to guide the interaction of a small, informal group, whereas a script is more likely to guide the interaction of a formal organization, where behavior may be more highly structured. Goffman also suggests that there may be ideas of intermediate complexity, such as a theme or plot. He describes a theme as including “both a direction of movement and a minimum set of roles to be enacted” (Hare and Blumberg 1988: 4). This theme will guide any instance collective behavior. He describes a plot as a “detailed scenario, defined roles and an indication of the stages a group must go through to reach a goal” (Hare and Blumberg 1988: 4). This plot will guide the activities of a social movement (Hare and Blumberg 1988).

Once an idea has been formulated, the creation of an action area, or stage, is needed. Creation of a stage may involve seeking and locating a site, constructing the

actual structure and making provisions for the audience. The stage is a crucial element in that it suggests “the time, both clock time and historical time, the mood of the play” (Hare and Blumberg 1988: 4), as well as the tone of the actors.

Upon the creation of a stage, the next phase of development involves the recruitment of actors and the training of roles. This recruitment and training is followed by the actual enactment of the performance. As the enactment commences, a period of appraisal will follow concerning “the effect of the action on the definition of the situation, both for the actors and for the audience” (Hare and Blumberg 1988: 4).

Upon the completion of a fully developed performance, several physical and interactional aspects may be characterized. “Because the self is a product of dramatic interaction, it is vulnerable to disruption during the performance. Goffman’s dramaturgy is extremely concerned with the processes by which such disturbances are prevented and dealt with” (Ritzer 2004: 358). Disturbances to the performance, along with preventative and intervening behaviors against these disturbances, take place in what Goffman calls, the front.

As Goffman’s performance refers to all activity of an individual actor, which occurs before an audience, with the intent to influence that audience; his front is that part of the individual actor’s performance, which functions to define the situation for that same audience, using props, or what he calls, expressive equipment (Goffman 1959).

Within the front, Goffman further differentiates between two standard parts: setting and personal front. Setting refers to the physical attributes of the scene or stage that must be present if the actors are to perform (Ritzer 2004). This setting may include: “furniture, décor, physical layout and other background items which supply the scenery

and stage props” (Goffman 1959: 22). Any setting, no matter the performance, tends to reside in the same geographical location. This static location allows an individual actor to control the setting, in that the performance begins when they arrive, with their appropriate props, and ends when they depart (Goffman 1959). If the term setting refers to the physical attributes of the scene or stage, one may use the term personal front to refer to those other props, or expressive equipment, that the audience intimately identifies with the actor. This personal front will consist of items that the audience naturally expects will follow the actor wherever he goes (Goffman 1959). Within the personal front, Goffman further differentiates between two standard parts: appearance and manner. Appearance may include those props which inform the audience of the actor’s social status (Ritzer 2004). Appearance educates the audience of the actor’s social obligations, expectations and achievements. Manner, on the other hand, may inform the audience of the role the actor is expected to play. Manner educates the audience as to the actor’s demeanor and attitude. A harsh manner and a humble manner indicate quite different modes of performing (Ritzer 2004). A harsh, aggressive manner “may give the impression that the actor expects to be the one who will initiate the verbal interaction and direct its course” (Goffman 1959: 24). A humble, apologetic manner “may give the impression that the actor expects to follow the lead of others, or at least that he can be led to do so” (Goffman 1959: 24).

As expected, appearance and manner are often consistent. However, they may contradict each other from time to time. One instance of such a contradiction may be “when an actor, who appears to be of a higher estate than his audience, acts in a manner that is unexpectedly equalitarian, or intimate, or apologetic” (Goffman 1959: 25), or vice

versa. In addition to the mentioned consistency of appearance and manner, Goffman (1959: 25) also suggests that there is “coherence among setting, appearance and manner. Such coherence represents an ideal type that provides a means of stimulating attention to and interest in expectation.” One of the most significant aspects of Goffman’s Theory of Dramaturgy lies within this domain of idealization. Goffman argues that because actors strive to present an idealized image of themselves, they will feel obligated to hide aspects of their selves or aspects of their performance from the audience.

Goffman suggests six modes of concealment and two performance techniques to expedite the presenting of idealized image. First, actors may wish to conceal secret or guilty pleasures engaged in prior to the performance. Actors may also wish to conceal these same pleasures or other overt aspects of their past lives that would be incompatible with their current performance (Ritzer 2004). Second, actors may wish to conceal the errors, or potential errors, that may have occurred in preparation for the performance. In addition, actors may wish to conceal the steps taken in the process in an effort to correct these errors (Ritzer 2004). Third, actors may wish to conceal the process in which they arrived at the “show” performance by revealing only the finished product (Ritzer 2004). Fourth, actors may wish to conceal from the audience what Goffman calls the “dirty work” of the process. Such “dirty work” may include: tasks that are “physically unclean, semi-legal, cruel, or degrading in other ways” (Ritzer 2004: 359). Fifth, actors may wish to loosen other held standards in order to uphold the particular standard portrayed by the current performance (Ritzer 2004). Sixth, actors may wish to conceal any insulting or humiliating incidents which might have occurred in the process of creating the

performance. In addition, actors may also wish to conceal any deals or promises made so that the performance could transpire (Ritzer 2004).

The second aspect of the idealization of dramaturgy is found in performance techniques. Goffman cites two examples of such techniques. First, actors will often transmit the impression that they are more intimate with the audience than they actually are. For example, actors will transmit the impression that the “performance in which they are engaged in at the moment is their only performance or at least their most important one” (Ritzer 2004: 360). In addition, actors will also transmit the impression that there is a unique quality to their performance as well as his or her connection to the audience (Ritzer 2004). Second, actors will employ a mystification technique in their performance by a means of “social distance.” By generating a chasm between themselves and the audience, actors will generate a sense of awe in an attempt to mystify members of the audience. This, in turn, will keep the audience from doubting the actor and his or her performance (Ritzer 2004).

Team

Various complexities of the performance led to Goffman’s interest in teams. To Goffman, a particularly strong Symbolic Interactionist, focusing primarily on individual actors masked important details about the process of interaction. Goffman’s basic component of analysis is, then, not the individual actor, but rather the team. A team may be defined as a set of individual actors who collaborate in staging a performance. Each member is dependent on the others, because any one actor has the potential to disrupt the performance and all are conscious that they performing collaboratively (Ritzer 2004).

Individual actors who are members of the same team will often find themselves, by virtue of this reality, in a dependent and significant relationship with one another. There are two basic components of this dependent and significant relationship between team members. First, during a given performance, any member of the team has the authority and opportunity to disrupt that performance by acting inappropriately. Each team member is then forced to rely on the appropriate conduct of his or her fellow teammates, and they, in turn, are forced to rely on that team member equally. There is then, perforce, a relationship of reciprocal dependence linking teammates to one another (Hare and Blumberg 1988). Secondly, if members of a team must collaborate to uphold a given definition of the situation before their audience, they will not wish to maintain that particular impression before one another in private. As collaborators in the maintenance of a particular definition of the situation, team members are forced to characterize one another as persons with whom a particular impression cannot or should not be maintained. Teammates, then, are bound by what Goffman calls, “familiarity.” Among teammates, the freedom of familiarity should not be a slowly developing process by which much time is spent in unfamiliarity, but rather a formal bond that is “automatically extended and received as soon as the individual takes a place on the team” (Hare and Blumberg 1988: 38-39).

Goffman argues that the function of an actor or group of actors, a team, is to uphold a definition of the situation by an act of maintaining the line. In the situation of a one-man team, an actor has no point of reference in which to inform his decision. He can, then, quickly reason which of the possible stances on a matter to take and then believe in this stance as if it were the only one possible. But if the circumstances change

from that of a one-man team to that of a larger, the stance on the matter taken by the individual actor must also be changed. Public disagreement among teammates regarding the definition of the situation may cause communal conflict if not concealed correctly from the audience. This public disagreement may not only debilitate the team from a unified stance, but may also embarrass the stance sponsored by them. To guard the definition of the situation, members of a team may be forced to delay taking a public stance until the stance of the team has been agreed upon. Once the team's stance has been voiced and approved, team members may be required to follow it, no matter their own personal beliefs...thus, maintaining the line. It is evident by the fear of communal conflict, that teams will maintain the line, by selecting as teammates those who can be trusted to perform properly, conform and adhere to the consensus of the group (Hare and Blumberg 1988).

In any given social setting or performance, there will be two teams represented. One team will consist of members who are dependent on one another in an attempt to maintain a particular definition of the situation. The other team will consist of all remaining individuals outside of the original team, and in their performances of response to that team, will themselves comprise a separate team. As each team will be acting through its performance for the other, this interaction will not be a combination of many voices, but rather a manner of dialogue between two teams (Hare and Blumberg 1988).

If this combination of voices is treated as a dialogue between two teams, it will be circumstantial to call one team the performers and one the audience or observers. Goffman depicts three social setting scenarios that enable teams to determine their roles as either performers or observers. First, if the "social setting in which the interaction

occurs is assembled and managed by one of the teams only, and contributes in a more intimate way to the show this team puts on than to the show put on in response by the other team” (Hare and Blumberg 1988: 43-44), the roles are easily distinguishable.

Second, if in a social setting, a team “puts on a performance and maintains a front, but the setting in which they do this is outside of their immediate control” (Hare and Blumberg 1988: 44), it may be said that the team which controls the setting would be the performers and the other the observers. Third, if in a social setting, “a team contributes more actively to the interaction, plays the more dramatically prominent role, or sets the pace and direction which both teams will follow in their dialogue” (Hare and Blumberg 1988: 44), this team may be labeled the performers and the other observers.

Regions and Region Behavior

Teams interact in the area that Goffman (1959: 106) terms a region. A region may be defined as any area that is restricted to some degree by modes of perception. Regions may vary greatly in the degree to which they are restricted. Actors may be allowed access to one region but not another, and the same holds true for the audience. Although access may be restricted, it will be possible for the actors and audience alike to perceive information from all regions without access to them.

Goffman depicts three regions in his dramaturgical approach: front region (or frontstage), back region (or backstage) and residual region (or outside). It may be possible for an area to not meet the characteristics of even one of these three regions, as it is possible for an area to meet the characteristics of all of these three regions (Ritzer 2004). “While there is a tendency for a region to become identified as the front region or back region of a performance with which it is regularly associated, still there are many

regions which function at one time and in one sense as a front region and at another time and in another sense as a back region” (Goffman 1959: 126).

As suggested earlier, when an individual actor or a team of actors conduct a performance in the presence of an audience, some aspects of their performance are accentuated and other aspects, which might disrupt the performance or the actor’s performance impression, are suppressed. These aspects, which are accentuated and not suppressed, will appear in what Goffman (1959) calls the front region. The suppressed aspects will appear in what Goffman (1959) calls the back region. A back region or backstage may, therefore, be defined as the area of a given performance where suppressed aspects or impressions presented by the actor are not disguised but openly presently.

The location of the back region is crucial to the success of the individual actor and performance itself. The back region is located adjacent to the front region, but also cut off from it. Although adjacent, the two regions will be separated or cut off by a guarded door or passageway. This being said, actors can reliably expect that no members of their front region audience will appear in the back region in an attempt to preserve the performance’s suppressed aspects (Ritzer 2004). Actors engage in many forms of impression management to ensure that this separation is maintained. If separation is not maintained, actors risk disruption to the performance, and possibly failure.

As suggested earlier, teammates who work together on any given performance tend to be in a familiar and often informal relationship with each other. This informal familiarity will be expressed only at times when the audience is not present. If this relationship were exposed to audience members it would convey an impression of “self

and teammate” which is ordinarily inconsistent with the impression of “self and teammate” one wants to sustain before the audience (Goffman 1959: 128). A back region, being restricted to members of the audience, is therefore the safe backdrop in which a team’s reciprocal familiarity can determine the tone of social intercourse. With similar reasoning, in the front region a tone of formality must prevail in order for the performance to display that consistency between “self and teammate” which is expected by the audience (Goffman 1959).

Because of the tone of familiarity in the back region, or lack there of in the front region, two distinct languages of behavior will exist. Familiarity and informality characterize the language of behavior of the back region. In this region, performers will be comfortable to express opinions, either personal or about the performance, use nicknames and engage in questionable behavior, such as smoking (Goffman 1959), or the telling of illicit jokes or life experiences. Formality and a lack of familiarity characterize the language behavior of the front region. Within the front region, any behavior, which might be offensive to the audience or other actors, is prohibited. Any form of informal behavior, which might be appropriate for the back region, will be considered disrespectful in the front.

In response to this model of language behavior, Goffman (1959) suggests three common limitations of back region informality. First, Goffman (1959: 129-130) discusses “trust and loyalty.” While occupying the back region, an actor will perform for his teammates in a way which will ensure them of his loyalty and trustfulness. This will be displayed by not disclosing any of the team’s secrets to the audience or outsiders and by reassuring them of his performance techniques and talents. An actor may elicit this

assurance by reiterating his worthiness and value to the performance. Second, Goffman (1959: 129-130) discusses “morale.” While occupying the back region it may be necessary for an actor to boost his own morale as well as the morale of his teammates. It may also be necessary for an actor to encourage, praise and compliment his fellow actors in an attempt to also encourage, praise and compliment the performance in general, whether in the past or of the future. The success of a performance may rely on the attitudes of the actors towards themselves and the performance in general. Third, Goffman (1959: 129-130) discusses “diversity.” Many back region limitations may exist based purely on the social diversity of the actors that may be present. Social diversity, involving age, sex, ethnicity, etc., will cause discretionary limits of social interaction to emerge. Whereas this fact may lead to restrictions of familiarity, it will not eliminate it.

Goffman (1959: 135) suggests that a third region, a residual region, exists which is neither front nor back. This region, consisting of all places other than the two already identified, may be called the “outside.” The notion of an outside region “conforms to our common-sense notion of social establishments, for when we look at most buildings we find within them rooms that are regularly or temporarily used as front regions and back regions, and we find that the outer walls of the building cut both types of rooms off from the outside world. Those individuals who are on the outside of the establishment we may call ‘outsiders’” (Goffman 1959: 135).

While the existence of an outside is both essential and functional, unless handled correctly it may misinform and confuse those for which the performance is intended as well as those for which the performance was not intended. “Those who are outside will be persons for whom the actors actually or potentially puts on a show, but a show

different from, or all too similar to, the one in progress. When outsiders unexpectedly enter the front or back region of a particular performance-in-progress, the consequence of their inopportune presence can often best be studied not in terms of its effects upon the performance-in-progress, but rather in terms of its effects upon a different performance, namely, the one which the actors or the audience would ordinarily present before the outsiders at a time and place when the outsiders would be the anticipated audience” (Goffman 1959: 135).

As mentioned previously, as a performance technique, actors will attempt to maintain the impression that the “performance in which they are engaged in at the moment is their only performance or at least their most important one” (Ritzer 2004: 360). In addition, actors will also transmit the impression that there is a unique quality to their performance as well as their connection to the audience (Ritzer 2004). When an outsider witnesses a show that they were not meant to see or was not intended for them, they may become disillusioned and cynical about this show as well as about the show that was originally intended for them. To combat this problem of disillusionment, actors segregate their audiences. This segregation will ensure that the audience who observes the actor in one role will not be the audience who observes that actor in another role (Goffman 1959).

Goffman (1959: 137-138) suggests a means of front region control to segregate the audience and prevent this disillusionment. He suggests two performance techniques unique to front region control. Audience segregation will be the first technique employed by actors. Just as it is essential for the actor to exclude audiences who see him in one role which is inconsistent with another role presented, it will be also essential for the actor to

“exclude from the audience those before whom he performed in the past a show inconsistent with the current one” (Goffman 1959: 137-138). Using these two techniques of audience segregation coupled with the proper scheduling of one’s performance, it may be possible to gain and regain control of the front region in such a way as to prevent any disillusionment or cynicism.

If front region control should fail, audience segregation will also fail as a result. If an outsider observes a performance not intended for him, problems in impression management may arise. In event that this may occur, Goffman (1959: 139-140) suggests two accommodative techniques in dealing with the possibility of impression failure: First, if an outsider should arrive, the audience and the actor will be forced to change the tone of the performance. The actor, in reacting to this outsider, will award audience members and outsiders alike a “temporary backstage status” that will enable a shifting of the performance to one that will be fitting to all witnesses. Second, if an outsider should arrive, the audience and the actor will be forced to admit their mistake of not inviting him or her in the first place and should welcome the outsider warmly. The audience and the actor will adapt to the arrival by suggesting that it was an oversight that the outsider was not there all along. The original performance will continue, but will be molded as to include the outsider.

Discrepant Roles

The sole purpose of any performance is to maintain the actor’s definition of the situation. Accomplishing this will involve both front region control and the concealment of destructive information from the audience. Destructive information may involve “the over-communication of some facts and the under-communication of others” (Goffman

1959: 141). Thus, the practice of information control is employed to prevent destructive information from disrupting or discrediting the performance.

In light of this information, Goffman (1959: 141) suggests that “a team of actors” may also be defined as a sort of “secret society,” and that this “secret society” is formed in reaction to the possibility of destructive information for the purpose of information control. In order to maintain its intended purpose it is imperative that “a team must be able to keep its secrets and have its secrets kept” (Goffman 1959: 141).

A team’s secrets will be based upon two criteria: “the function the secret performs and the relation of the secret to the conception others have about the possessor” (Goffman 1959: 141). Goffman (1959) suggests the possibility of five types of secrets. First, there is what Goffman (1959) calls dark secrets. Dark secrets are those facts which conceal an incompatible or undesirable image of the team, which goes against the impression they are striving to maintain before the audience. Secondly, there is what Goffman (1959) calls strategic secrets. Strategic secrets are those intentions which a team conceals in order to prevent the audience from predicting the team’s next move. Thirdly, there is what Goffman (1959) calls inside secrets. Inside secrets are those privileged facts only known by other teammates. These facts mark an individual actor as part of the team and differentiate those actors as separate from the outside. The possibility that one team could possess the secrets of another team leads Goffman (1959: 143) to the distinction between the final two types of secrets: entrusted secrets and free secrets. Entrusted secrets are those which the actor is obligated to keep in order to show his loyalty and trustworthiness to the team. Free secrets are those which do not belong to the actor so they may be presented openly without disrupting the credibility of the impression being

maintained by the actor “in the know” of this secret. An actor may acquire free secrets by “discovery, involuntary disclosure, indiscreet admissions and retransmission” (Goffman 1959: 143).

The successful execution of information control, guarding against the uncovering of such secrets, is dependent upon the information possessed about the three roles involved in the performance: the actor, the audience, and outsiders. Consequently, if the region were known of which the actor had access, it would be known of the information the actor possessed as well as the role being played by that actor (Goffman 1959).

To employ information control, Goffman (1959: 144) suggests understanding the congruence of these three crucial roles in their “function, information possessed and regions of access.” Actors (those who perform) are aware of both the impression they transmit to the audience and other actors as well as of the destructive information they possess about the performance or other actor’s impressions. Actors have access and appear in both the front region and back region. The audience (those performed to) are aware of the impression being transmitted as well as the potentially destructive information being concealed. The audience may only have access and appear in the front region. Outsiders (who neither perform nor observe) are aware of neither the impression being transmitted nor the potentially destructive information being concealed. Outsiders may have access to neither the front region nor the back region.

However, congruence among the function, information possessed and accessible regions of these three crucial roles is rarely complete. “Additional points of vantage relative to the performance develop which complicate the simple relation among function, information and place” (Goffman 1959: 145). These vantage points are so

frequently taken and their significance to the performance becomes so closely implied that they transform into roles of their own, or what Goffman (1959) calls, discrepant roles.

Goffman (1959) suggests ten examples of discrepant roles. First, Goffman (1959: 145) suggests the role of the informer. An informer is one who pretends to be an actor to ensure trust from the team. This “pretend actor” will gain access to the back region through this trust to acquire destructive information about the team. He will then overtly or inertly inform the audience of the information gained by his back region access in order to spoil the performance. Goffman (1959: 145) suggests there exist two types of informers: traitors and spies. A traitor is one who ensures the trust of the team in a sincere manner with no “premeditated plan of disclosing its secrets” (Goffman 1959: 145). A spy is one who ensures the trust of the team with the intention of gaining access to privileged information in which to sell out the team to the audience. Second, Goffman (1959) suggests the role of the shill. A shill is one who acts as a member of the audience, but is in reality in an alliance with the actors. A shill may provide one of two services for actors involved in the performance: 1) The shill may act as a model audience member in an attempt to elicit the type of response from the audience desired by the actors, or 2) The shill may act as a model audience member in attempt to provide the type of audience response crucial for the development of a particular scene. Third, Goffman (1959) suggests the role of the spotter. A spotter is one who verifies the standards an actor must maintain in order to ensure that transmitted impressions are congruent with reality. Fourth, Goffman (1959) suggests the role of the shopper. A shopper is one who employs an inconspicuous role in the audience in order to gain information about the performance.

The shopper will, in turn, use this information to inform the competition of elements in the actor's show. Fifth, Goffman (1959) suggests the role of the go-between or mediator. A go-between is one who has loyalties to both the actors and the audience. A go-between will learn the secrets of both the actors and the audience by expressing confidence that these secrets will not be revealed to the other. Sixth, Goffman (1959) suggests the role of the non-person. A non-person is one who is present during the performance but does not act in it nor observe it. In addition, a non-person will not disguise their true role, as an informer, shill or spotter might do.

The four remaining roles consist of individuals not present during a performance. These individuals are neither actors nor audience members, but possess information about the performance being given (Goffman 1959). Seventh, Goffman (1959: 153-155) suggests the role of the service specialist. A service specialist is one who "constructs, repairs and maintenances" (Goffman 1959: 153-155), the performance given by his clients. There are several ways in which service specialists are both similar to and dissimilar from the actors of a team. They are similar to actors of a team in that they learn secrets of the performance through back region access. Unlike actors of a team, however, a service specialist "does not share the risk, guilt, or satisfaction of presenting before an audience the performance to which he has contributed" (Goffman 1959: 153-155). Also, unlike actors of a team, service specialists are privy to the secrets of the team, but do not disclose either secrets or information about themselves with either the audience or the team. It is through this context that professional ethics can be understood to "oblige the service specialist to show 'discretion,' i.e. not to give away a performance whose secrets his duties have made him privy to" (Goffman 1959: 153-155). Eighth,

Goffman (1959: 159) suggests the role of the confidant. A confidant is one who counsels the actors of a team. These are “persons to whom the actor confesses his sins, freely detailing the sense in which the impression given during a performance was merely an impression” (Goffman 1959: 159). Typically, confidants remain outside of the performance and possess knowledge of the performance only through actors’ accounts. Ninth, Goffman (1959) suggests the role of the colleague. A colleague is one who may act out a performance uniform to the one in-progress, but this performance is not conducted as a collaboration nor is it conducted at the same time and location. Tenth, as a sub-group of colleagues, Goffman (1959: 164-165) suggests the role of the renegade. “Just as some persons are thought to cause difficulty by making too much of their collegueship, so others cause trouble by not making enough of it. It is always possible for a disaffected colleague to turn renegade and sell out to the audience of the act that his onetime brethren are still performing” (Goffman 1959: 164-165). A renegade is one who separates themselves from the collegueship by taking a moral stance. Renegades promote the truth of the ideals in their roles, rather than the actors who are falsely presenting them.

Communication Out of Character

As mentioned previously, when two teams interact they will both strive to maintain the line agreed upon by their team and persist in the particular character of that line throughout the performance. If this line maintenance is to be achieved both teams will be forced to suppress backstage familiarity and find a balance between formality and informality on stage (Goffman 1959). In the occurrence of line maintenance failure, both the line and the character of a team may be lost.

If a disruption to a performance should occur, especially at a time when a misidentification of impression is exposed, a portrayed character may temporarily collapse. This collapse will take place when the actor behind the character “forgets himself and blurts out a relatively unperformed exclamation” (Goffman 1959: 168-169). This “unperformed exclamation” may serve as an actor’s admittance that he has temporarily placed himself in a position in which it is obvious that “no performed character can be sustained” (Goffman 1959: 168-169). These unperformed exclamations represent a form of what Goffman (1959) terms communication out of character.

Communication out of character “demonstrates that while an actor may act as if his response in a situation were immediate, unthinking and spontaneous, and while he himself may think this to be the case, still it will always be possible for situations to arise in which he will convey to one or two individuals present the understanding that the show he is maintaining is only and merely a show” (Goffman 1959: 169). The occurrence of communication out of character provides an arena for the examining of performance in terms of teams and potential performance disruptions (Goffman 1959).

Communication out of character may then be defined as types of communication in which the actor engages, either intentionally or unintentionally, which transmits an impression which is incompatible or contrary to the impression officially maintained by the team (Goffman 1959). Goffman (1959) suggests four types of communication out of character exist. First, Goffman (1959: 170-175) suggests treatment of the absent. When the members of a team employ the back region of a performance, where they cannot be seen or heard by the audience, teammates will tend to derogate the audience. This derogation will be conducted in a way which is contradictory to the impression given on

stage while in front of the audience. Goffman (1959) further depicts the two most common techniques of derogating: mock role-playing and uncomplimentary terms of reference. Mock role-playing will occur in the region where the audience normally resides, but is not present at the time because they have already departed or have not arrived as of yet. In this region actors will perform a “satire” of their performance to the “pretend” audience. This will be conducted in such a way that some actors will play themselves and others will play the role of the audience. Uncomplimentary terms of reference are characterized by “a consistent difference between terms of reference and terms of address” (Goffman 1959: 170-175). In the presence of the audience, actors will use more formal and favorable forms of address for them. In the absence of the audience, however, actors will use more informal and sometimes unfavorable terms of address, such as “bare surname, first name, nickname, or slight pronunciation of full name” (Goffman 1959: 170-175). Techniques of derogation have been crucial in pointing out that, “verbally, individuals are treated relatively well to their faces and relatively badly behind their backs” (Goffman 1959: 170-175). Second, Goffman (1959: 175-176) suggests staging talk. In the absence of the audience, actors will often be found to discuss issues in staging. Such issues may include: “conditions of sign-equipment; stands, lines and positions; merits and demerits of available front regions; size and character of possible audiences; past performance disruptions” (Goffman 1959: 175-176); possible future disruptions; news of colleagues; receptions to past performances; mistakes and errors; and morale strengthening. Third, Goffman (1959: 177, 186-187) suggests team collusion. Team collusion may be defined as any “collusive communication” which is cautiously conveyed in such a way as to prevent a threat to the impression that is being

transmitted to the audience. Goffman (1959) suggests two types of team collusion: staging cues and derisive collusion. Staging cues may be defined as a system of covert signs through which actors secretly obtain or convey information which is crucial to the success of a performance. Staging cues foster a relationship between those actors conducting a performance and others assisting or serving backstage. Derisive collusion involves communication which functions to verify for the actor the fact that “he does not really hold with the working consensus, that the show he puts on is only a show, thereby providing himself with at least a private defense against the claims made by the audience” (Goffman 1959: 177, 186-187). Derisive collusion is communication which occurs most commonly between an actor and himself, but may also occur between fellow actors when conducting a performance collaboratively. Fourth, Goffman (1959: 190) suggests realigning actions. Actors may realign actions when they are disgruntled with the “working consensus.” Actors will speak out of character in such a way that they will be heard by the audience but will not endanger the honor of the team or the social distance between them. These momentary and unauthorized realignments may often be aggressive in nature and upset the relationship of team collusion.

Arts of Impression Management

Goffman (1959: 210) defines the arts of impression management as oriented toward guarding against a series of unexpected actions. Unexpected actions are sources of embarrassment or discord among teammates which can function to disrupt a performance. Unexpected actions are “typically unintended by the actor who is responsible for making them and which would be avoided were the actor to know in advance the consequences of his activity” (Goffman 1959: 210). Goffman (1959:

208,360) suggests that there are four types of unexpected actions: unintended gestures, inopportune intrusions, faux pas and scenes. These four and many other performance disruptions are which the techniques of impression management function to avoid.

By unmeant gestures, Goffman (1959: 208-209) suggests that the actor must perform with meaningful accountability, since any minor or unintentional act could stand to transmit inappropriate impressions at any time. The individual actor “held responsible for contributing an unmeant gesture may chiefly discredit his own performance by this, a teammate’s performance, or the performance being staged by his audience” (Goffman 1959: 208-209).

By inappropriate intrusions, Goffman (1959: 209) suggests when an outsider or audience member inadvertently enters a region in which they should not have access, such as a back region, or a performance in which they should not have admittance, the intruder is likely to catch the actors of that region “flagrante delicto.” Consequently, the actors present in that region will be aware that they have been “witnessed in activity that is quite incompatible with the impression that they are, for wider social reasons, under obligation to maintain for the intruder” (Goffman 1959: 209).

By faux pas, Goffman (1959: 210) suggests that activity from an actor’s past or current life may contain facts which, if were known by the audience, would disrupt or weaken the impression being transmitted about the definition of the situation being performed. “These facts may involve well-kept dark secrets or negatively-valued characteristics that everyone can see but no one refers to. When such facts are introduced, embarrassment is the usual result” (Goffman 1959: 210).

By scenes, Goffman (1959: 210) suggests that situations may arise in which an individual actor performs in such a way as to discredit or disclaim the appearance of accord between fellow actors or actors and the audience. While this discrediting may not be deliberate, it will be known to the actor that performing in such a way could result in discord. Goffman (1959) suggests several instances in which a scene could occur. First, a scene may occur when teammates can no longer tolerate each other's incompetent performing and may publicly criticize those to which they feel disrupt team collaboration (Goffman 1959). Second, a scene may occur when the audience can no longer tolerate the actor's performance and confront the actor "with facts or expressive acts which each team knows will be unacceptable" (Goffman 1959: 211). Third, a scene may occur when two actors are engaged in such a passionate interaction that their heated performance engages the attention of nearby individuals who are then forced to bear witness to the performance or become involved in it (Goffman 1959). Fourth, a scene may occur in which an actor commits so sincerely to a particular stance, that were this stance denied by the audience, the actor would have no escape from the resulting embarrassment of the denial. For this reason, actors make sure that their stance is the kind of which is likely to be approved by the audience (Goffman 1959).

Goffman's (1959: 212) four unexpected actions as well as other various disruptions are often called the "incidents of dramaturgy". When an "incident" occurs, the definition of the situation fostered by the actors is endangered. Individuals who witness an incident are likely to respond by becoming "flustered, ill at ease, embarrassed, nervous, and the like" (Goffman 1959: 212). When the actors perceive these responses of

embarrassment, the definition of the situation that is supported by the performance is likely to be further endangered.

In order to avoid the occurrence of incidents and the resulting embarrassment, it will be necessary for the actors of a performance, as well as those who assist or observe, “to possess certain attributes and to express these attributes in practices employed for saving the show” (Goffman 1959: 212). These attributes are viewed from three standpoints: 1) The defensive measures used by actors to save their own show; 2) The protective measures used by the audience and outsiders to assist the actors in saving the show; and 3) The measures the actors must take in order to make it possible for the audience and outsiders to employ protective measures on the actors’ behalf (Goffman 1959: 212).

Concerning defensive measures used by actors to save their own show, Goffman (1959: 212-229) suggests three attributes that are crucial if actors wish to save their show from embarrassment: loyalty, discipline and circumspection. First, Goffman defines dramaturgical loyalty as “a set of methods involving actions aimed at fostering high in-group loyalty, preventing team members from identifying with the audience and changing audiences periodically so that they do not become too knowledgeable about the actors” (Ritzer 2004: 361). Goffman (1959) suggests a key problem of dramaturgical loyalty, however. It may be possible for an actor to become so emotionally involved with the audience that the actor discloses to them consequences of the impressions they are being given. This emotional involvement will betray the team as well as the definition of the situation. Goffman (1959: 214-215) suggests two preventative techniques that can assist an actor in avoiding this disloyalty. First, actors may avoid disloyalty by fostering a

“high in-group solidarity” between teammates. They may also create a backstage image of the audience making them less available for “emotional and moral” support. Second, actors may avoid disloyalty by changing audiences so sporadically that an affectual bond will not have a chance to develop.

Second, Goffman defines dramaturgical discipline as “having the presence of mind to avoid slips, maintain self-control, and manage the facial expressions and verbal tone of one’s performance” (Ritzer 2004: 361). Goffman (1959) suggests the purpose of dramaturgical discipline is the management of one’s physical and emotional performance. This type of discipline is a vital test of one’s acting ability. An actor must be competent to conceal inappropriate emotional responses and display appropriate ones all the while maintaining the front physically that this internal decision-making is not taking place.

Third, Goffman defines dramaturgical circumspection as “determining in advance how a performance should go, planning for emergencies, selecting loyal teammates, choosing proper audiences, being involved in small teams where dissensions are unlikely, making only brief appearances, preventing audience access to private information and settling on a complete agenda to prevent unforeseen occurrences” (Ritzer 2004: 361). Concerning the protective measures used by the audience and outsiders to assist the actors in saving the actors’ show, Goffman (1959: 229) suggests that some of the most self-protective techniques of show saving have a correspondence in the discreet tendency of the audience and outsiders to act in a defensive manner in order to assist the actors in saving their own show.

Goffman (1959: 229-233) describes five aspects of the audience and outsiders' protective practices: 1) Members of the audience and outsiders alike "voluntarily" refrain from entering into regions to which they have no open-invitation. But if one of these individuals should find that they are about to enter such a region, "they often give those already present some warning, in the form of a message, knock, or cough, so that the intrusion can be put off if necessary or the setting hurriedly put back in order and proper expressions fixed on the faces of those present" (Goffman 1959: 229-233). 2) In the event that a performance must proceed before the uninvited, particularly an outsider, those uninvited will "tactfully act in an uninterested, uninvolved, unperceiving fashion, so that if physical isolation is not obtained by walls or distance, effective isolation can at least be obtained by convention" (Goffman 1959: 229-233). 3) "Once the audience has been admitted to a performance, the necessity of being tactful does not cease" (Goffman 1959: 229-233). There is an "elaborate etiquette by which individuals guide themselves in their capacity as members of the audience" (Goffman 1959: 229-233). This involves: the giving of a proper amount of attention and interest; a willingness to hold in check one's own performance so as not to introduce too many contradictions, interruptions, or demands for attention; the inhibition of all acts or statements that might create a faux pas; and the desire, above all, to avoid a scene. 4) If an actor should make a mistake of some kind, transmitting a inconsistency between the impression wanted and impression performed, "the audience may tactfully 'not see' the slip or readily accept the excuse that is offered for it" (Goffman 1959: 229-233). Finally, 5) When an actor is "known to be a beginner, and more subject than otherwise to embarrassing mistakes, the audience frequently shows extra consideration, refraining from causing the difficulties it might

otherwise create” (Goffman 1959: 229-233). Members of audiences and outsiders alike are forced to act diplomatically because of their identification with the actor. They may choose to act tactfully, however, to avoid a scene or to curry favor with the actors for the “purpose of exploitation” (Goffman 1959).

Concerning the measures the actors must take in order to make it possible for the audience and outsiders to employ protective measures on the actors’ behalf, Goffman (1959: 234) implies that the audience and outsiders contribute significantly to the success of a show by “exercising tact or protective practices” on the behalf of the actors. As it is essential that if the audience and outsiders are to utilize tact on the actors’ behalf, the actors, in turn, must perform in such a way as to make the “rendering of this assistance possible” (Goffman 1959: 234). This utilization of tact will require both discipline and circumspection on the part of the actors receiving assistance. Goffman (1959: 234) suggests two strategies regarding “tact with respect to tact.” First, the actors must be receptive to the audience and outsiders’ “hints” and ready to receive them. This reception will be essential in that these “hints” will allow the audience and outsiders to inform the actor if his show is found undesirable. If these “hints” are perceived then actors may alter or amend the show in order to save it. Secondly, if actors are to lie or “misrepresent facts in any way, they must do so in accordance with the etiquette for misrepresentation; they must not leave themselves in a position from which even the lamest excuse and the most co-operative audience cannot extricate them” (Goffman 1959: 234).

Chapter 3, Methodology, details the research design of this thesis. The data collection process (participant-observation, specifically the role of complete participant),

and method of analysis (utilization of the metaphor, dramaturgical analysis) are discussed as well as their advantages and disadvantages. In addition, specificities of the research design are also presented: 1) the nature of the sampling frame and final research sample and 2) the time frame of field research.

III. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this thesis, the Lee County Flea Market, located in East Alabama, was investigated using participant-observation, the methodological approach most commonly used in the practice of field research. Uncontrolled and unobtrusive participant-observation was employed through the role of complete-participant. Any individual present in the flea market setting (flea market buyer, flea market seller, flea market manager) during an observation day was anonymously observed as part of the participant population. Data collected through this method was validated against concepts of Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy, a methodology that utilizes the metaphor of drama and theater to interpret human behavior in everyday life (Turner and Edgley 1976). The validation of these concepts elicited significant findings to the research problem: The types and functions of social interaction found in the flea market setting, in hopes of gaining new insight into patterns of social interaction of everyday life. This dramaturgical analysis was the foundation upon which all sociological conclusions and recommendations for future research were based.

Dramaturgical Analysis

Dramaturgical analysis is a truly unique research tool by which to study social interaction. "The notion that life is rather like a theater, of actors playing their parts to audiences, sometimes within the bounds of roles, and sometimes with considerable distance from them, is an ancient metaphor recently resurrected by social psychology as a

device for analyzing behavior” (Turner and Edgley 1976: 377-378). In the context in which it will be applied and for the purpose of this thesis, Goffman defines the aim of dramaturgical analysis as: “to simply uncover the various manipulations by which people alter their audiences’ perceptions of them” (Ritzer 2005: 221). This dramaturgical analysis constituted the framework in which social interaction found in the flea market setting was studied, analyzed and summarized.

Similar to all other methodologies of the social sciences, the utilization of the metaphor (dramaturgical analysis) as a research tool has both advantages and disadvantages. The first advantage of the utilization of the metaphor is that metaphors make socially constructed reality appear eccentric and extraordinary, thereby testing and re-testing “commonsensical and taken-for-granted ideas” (Manning 1991: 78). Viewing Goffman’s dramaturgical analysis in this way will compel social science scholars to reevaluate everyday interaction, to reconsider “mundane” social events as perhaps surprising. The second advantage of the utilization of the metaphor is that metaphors “suggest more than passing resemblances between apparently different things” (Manning 1991: 78). That is, metaphors construct “semantic maps to the social world” (Manning 1991: 78). The construction of these semantic maps will allow for the extension of research to new subjects while still developing diverse aspects of the metaphor. Viewing Goffman’s dramaturgical analysis in this way, while studying the use of scripts by actors in everyday interaction, it will also be feasible to study “the extent to which this is done, how it is done, the difference between scripts, and so on” (Manning 1991: 78). The third advantage of the utilization of the metaphor is that metaphors can be used “twice.” That is, metaphors can be used in terms of factors they expose of social reality and also in

terms of inadequacies they expose as models of social reality. Through this double utilization, metaphors have the potential to create new “insights and questions” about the consequent double utilization of social reality itself. Viewing dramaturgical analysis as a method of double utilization, Goffman desired his metaphor to be used as a “guide” of social reality and then as a “falsification” of it (Manning 1991). In addition, the use of metaphors by social scientists “undermines the idea that their work has the objectivity of mathematics and emphasizes the fact that sociology is forged from an uneasy combination of meanings; some of these meanings derive from the people who are being studied, others from sociologists themselves” (Manning 1991: 78).

In contrast, one disadvantage of using the metaphor in social science research is that “metaphors, by definition, are literally absurd, and thus require the indulgence of all concerned” (Manning 1991: 78-79). However persuasive a metaphor may seem to be, it will always remain a “category error,” a fascinating uncertainty. Thus, suspicion is placed on the strength of a study involving the metaphor as its research tool, even if the metaphor is doubly utilized. A second disadvantage of using the metaphor in social science research is that results of a metaphor-based study cannot be proved or disproved. For this reason, results will have little scientific validity. For example, how could one prove Goffman’s own metaphorical theater as “true” or “false”? Metaphorical research tools are, therefore, interpreted as according to one’s own perception of believability (Manning 1991).

Taking into consideration both the advantages and disadvantages of the utilization of Goffman’s dramaturgical analysis, metaphors may be characterized as only “partial descriptions” of social reality. These “partial descriptions,” in turn, validate the

possibility of the existence of other descriptions and that they may be nonetheless also noteworthy (Manning 1991).

Participant-Observation

Participant-observation entails the researcher's attempt to form either a membership in or close association with the group of subjects under study. In doing so, the researcher not only observes, but attempts to grasp, and in some cases adopt, the perspectives of the subjects in their natural setting (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000). In the field setting, two roles of participant-observation may be taken by the researcher, complete participant and participant-as-observer. For the purpose of this thesis, uncontrolled and unobtrusive participant-observation was employed through the role of complete participant.

If a research study lends itself to the role of complete participant, the researcher will not only be "wholly concealed," but the research objectives and goals will be also concealed or unknown to those being observed. Although unidentified, the researcher will still attempt to become a member in the group under study (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000: 258), but will neither disrupt nor disturb the everyday behavior of the group and will blend in with and preserve the natural setting as much as possible.

The method of complete participant has been ethically warranted on the argument that only this role makes it possible to investigate "inaccessible" individuals or individuals "that do not reveal to outsiders certain aspects of their lives" (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000: 259). However valid this argument may be, this method of data collection still poses several methodological problems. First, it may be possible that the researcher becomes so engrossed in his or her concealment "that they are

handicapped when attempting to perform convincingly in the pretended role” (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000: 259). Second, while assuming this role, it is imperative that the researcher does not prompt reactions or behaviors or pose questions that might raise “suspicion” in those subjects under study. Because of this limitation, it is oftentimes difficult for the researcher to select exactly what to observe. Third, to maintain role concealment, the recording of data while in the field setting will need to be concealed. Thus, the journaling of observations will have to be completed once the researcher is absent from those that he or she is studying. This fact may create yet another limitation for the researcher; lapses in time between observation and recording may introduce both “selective biases” and “memory distortions” into research findings which could possibly contaminate the study’s validity (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000: 260). In view of these limitations, some field researchers may chose to adopt the role of participant-as-observer.

If a research investigation lends itself to the role of participant-as-observer, those under study will be informed of the research agenda (objectives and goals) prior to observation. Thus, the participant-as-observer role differs from the complete participant role in that both the researcher and research agenda are openly identified with subjects under study. By employing this method, the researcher “gains a deeper appreciation of the group and its way of life and may also gain deeper levels of insight by actually participating rather than only observing” (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000: 260). Aside from this major difference, gaining membership in and forming close associations with the group of subjects under study will be an essential function of this methodological approach, as it is with the role of complete participant.

Sampling Frame/Research Sample

For the purpose of this thesis, all flea market settings located in Lee County, Alabama constituted the sampling frame from which a final research sample was drawn. Within cities located in Lee County, Alabama, (Auburn, Opelika, Smiths, Waverly and Loachapoka), a total of five flea market settings exist. These five flea market settings constituted the sampling frame for this thesis: Auburn, AL: Farmville Flea Market at the Auburn Covered Arena; Opelika, AL: Angel's Antique and Flea Mall; Bargain Corner; and Station Point Flea Market; And, Smiths, AL: Lee County Flea Market Inc.

Because the direction of this thesis necessitated observation of social interaction between flea market buyers and flea market sellers, three of the five flea market settings were excluded. Angel's Antique and Flea Mall, Bargain Corner and Station Point Flea Market were excluded from the final research sample because they lacked individual sellers and were structured in a way more similar to a conventional retail store. In addition, it was discovered that the Farmville Flea Market at the Auburn Covered Arena was no longer in operation and so was also excluded from the final research sample. Excluding these four, the nature of the final research sample for this thesis included: the Lee County Flea Market Inc. in Smiths, AL and so this thesis took on characteristics of a case study approach.

Time Frame of Research Design

The Lee County Flea Market was investigated five times in one-day periods. It was not the intent of this thesis to investigate the trends or changes in social interaction within the flea market setting, and for this reason, this thesis provided elements of a cross-sectional analysis.

All field research was conducted during the months of July and September 2006. The month of July was selected because, according to the reading of relevant literature, summer months in Southern flea markets produce larger buyer populations as well as larger seller populations. For the purpose of this thesis, larger buyer and seller populations found in the flea market setting provided a larger sampling frame of social interaction to be observed. The month of September was selected as a follow-up observation month because the above average temperatures during the month of July made it difficult to stay in the flea market setting for longer than a couple of hours at a time. In addition, it was hoped to observe the difference in buyer and seller populations between summer seasons and fall seasons in the southeast flea market circuit. The schedule of observation dates was as follows: July 2, 2006, July 8, 2006, July 29, 2006, September 17, 2006 and September 23, 2006.

Chapter 4, Analysis and Discussion of Findings, consists of two parts. Part I, Observations of the Lee County Flea Market, contains transcribed and essay-formatted field notes. Information provided in this section includes: general information about the Lee County Flea Market, specific observation dates and applicable field notes. Part II, Dramaturgical Applications to Flea Market Processes, presents an overview of research analyses as well as a discussion of relevant findings. The structural framework of this chapter was modeled after Ronny E. Turner and Charles Edgley's 1976 publication, "Death as Theater: A Dramaturgical Analysis of the American Funeral." In Turner and Edgley's (1976) publication, ten aspects characteristic of the American funeral are discussed as relating to ten aspects of Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy. These ten aspects include: The Performative Nature of Funeral Directing, Role Distance: The

Sacred and the Profane, Backstage Regions: Preparation and Rehearsal, The Backstage Setting, The Rhetoric of Backstage Regions, Frontstage Performances: Bringing Off the Show, Controlling the Situation: The Cast of Characters, The Funeral Home as Theater and Stage, Establishing the Mood and Frontstage Rhetoric and the Denial of Death. In the same manner, this chapter consists of a discussion of aspects characteristic of the Lee County Flea Market as related to aspects of Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy.

IV. APPLICATION AND DISCUSSION

PART I: Observations of the Lee County Flea Market

The Lee County Flea Market is located in Smiths, Alabama (on Highway 431 North and 280 West at Lee County Road 379). This flea market serves not only residents of Central Alabama and the Columbus, Georgia area, but attracts tourists from around the southeast and sellers from around the country, especially with its added amenity of campground accessibility.

The Lee County Flea Market is an outdoor venue covering more than a square mile with a sheltered section located near the Lee County Road 379 entrance. Approximately fifty to one hundred sellers are present every weekend and the average attendance ranges between fifteen and twenty-five hundred daily. This flea market is open for business year-round, every Saturday and Sunday of the month, with operating hours beginning at six a.m. each day.

The Lee County Flea Market is professionally organized. Seller booths/spaces are supervised by Bryant and Ruth Williams, owners and operators, through a management office onsite. Seller rent ranges from three to twelve dollars daily and is determined by: square feet of booth/space and location of booth/space, either outdoors or under sheltering.

Outdoor booths/spaces are reserved on a first-come-first-served basis. With only a limited number of booths provided by management, many sellers opt to bring their own

display booths, trailers, or tents and set up along the outside edge of the property.

Sheltered booths/spaces are of two types and are reserved on a more permanent basis.

The sheltered section is organized in a horse-shoe pattern with two rows of booths, one lining the outside and one lining the inside. The inside lining of booths are the most permanent and feature not only a display booth, but also a locked storage space in which many sellers store their merchandise during nonbusiness hours. The outside lining of booths are occupied by more semi-permanent sellers with a majority of these sellers not storing their merchandise from week to week.

For an outdoor venue of its size, the Lee County Flea Market offers a great deal of buyer- and seller-friendly amenities. As mentioned previously, there is a management office onsite, as well as two owners/operators on location almost every weekend. Not only is there ample parking, but both parking and admission are free. In addition, a grassy area near the 280 West entrance has been designated a campground for RV/Camper parking with easy access to the main highway. Restrooms are located behind the sheltered section and a phone can be easily accessed for emergencies. While there are no paved aisles, the property is level and offers handicap accessibility. Every weekend buyers and sellers have at least three choices of food concessions, with a permanent concession found in the sheltered section and the rest outdoors. Because it is primarily an outdoor venue, heating and air conditioning are not available, but each sheltered booth does have at least one electrical outlet. For those sellers with access to an assigned booth/space, a display table is provided by management as well as outside advertising.

Vendors at the Lee County Flea Market sell a wide variety of merchandise. As advertised on the website, “The Flea Market Hub,” the nature of merchandise sold includes: “new merchandise, housewares, sportswear, antiques, collectibles and primitives and farm items” (<http://www.keysfleamarket.com/fleamarket/state/alabama.htm>). In addition to these and other items of general popularity, as mentioned in Chapter 2, this flea market also features many merchandise items consistently week to week: tools (new and used); collectible knives and lighters; hunting equipment; cosmetics; handcrafted belts, buckles, wallets and jewelry; china; glassware; VHS cassette tapes and DVDs (new and used); figurines (mostly Western and Indian motif); hand-stitched purses and tote bags; grocery items; sunglasses; watches; shoes and clothing (new and used); children’s toys (new and used); personalized bumper stickers, car decals and license plates; framed posters and prints; books (new and used); small appliances; house plants; furniture (new and antique); oil paintings; original artworks; baby supplies (new and used); pottery, and many more. This flea market also features several items which may be considered region-specific, such as: Western décor, Dixie motif and hat and t-shirt screen-printing.

Not only are many merchandise items featured consistently, but this flea market also hosts at least two dozen regular sellers. These sellers can be found in the same booth or space from week to week and season to season. These “Lee County regulars” most often specialize in a specific merchandise item or can be categorized as “dealers.” A majority of these “dealers” are located in the more permanent sheltered booths/spaces, but several prefer the outdoor areas. With very few “wholesalers” featured at this flea market, the remaining sellers can be categorized as “marketers.” The “marketer’s” merchandise is a potpourri of items, both new and used, that oftentimes varies weekly.

These sellers tend to run a more temporary business and their presence at the Lee County Flea Market varies from week to week.

As explained in detail in Chapter 3, for the purpose of this thesis the Lee County Flea Market was investigated five times in one-day periods during the months of July and September 2006. Arrival time, weather conditions and number of sellers and buyers present during each observation day are listed below.

Observation Day 1

The first day of observation was Sunday, July 2, 2006. Arrival time was approximately 12:30 p.m. Weather conditions were sunny, with no rain forecasted all weekend. At the time of arrival, there were approximately thirty sellers and two hundred and fifty buyers present.

Observation Day 2

The second day of observation was Saturday, July 8, 2006. Arrival time was approximately 10:30 a.m. Weather conditions were sunny, with no rain forecasted all weekend. At the time of arrival, there were approximately one hundred plus sellers and one thousand plus buyers present.

Observation Day 3

The third day of observation was Saturday, July 29, 2006. Arrival time was approximately 8:30 a.m. Weather conditions were sunny, with rain forecasted for the late afternoon. At the time of arrival, there were approximately one hundred plus sellers and one thousand plus buyers present.

Observation Day 4

The fourth day of observation was Sunday, September 17, 2006. Arrival time was approximately 11:15 a.m. Weather conditions were sunny, with no rain forecasted all weekend. At the time of arrival, there were approximately one hundred plus sellers and one thousand plus buyers present.

Observation Day 5

The fifth day of observation was Saturday, September 23, 2006. Arrival time was approximately 8:30 a.m. Weather conditions were overcast, with rain forecasted all weekend. At the time of arrival, there were approximately one hundred sellers and five hundred to one thousand buyers present.

PART II: Dramaturgical Applications to Flea Market Processes

Thus far this thesis has examined: the few academic research studies pertaining to the flea market setting, flea market handbooks and guidebooks published over the last thirty years and Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy as discussed in detail in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. This section of "Application and Discussion" involves the weaving together of these three elements with observations made in the field setting. This weaving together was used to create broad application of Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy to aspects characteristic of the flea market setting.

With the note that application could not be made to Goffman's dramaturgical themes of "team" and "communication out of character," the remaining four themes are discussed below. These four theoretical concepts, performance, regions and region behavior, discrepant roles and impression management, are transformed into: The Performative Nature of Flea Marketing (performance), The "Formalities" and "Informalities" of Flea Marketing (regions and region behavior), Discrepancies in Flea Marketing (discrepant roles) and "Defensive" and "Offensive" Flea Marketing (impression management).

The Performative Nature of Flea Marketing

Within the flea market setting, a performance may be defined as any and all activity of an individual actor (flea market seller), which occurs before an audience (flea

market buyer), with the intent to influence that audience for a profit. The “cast of characters,” therefore, in any flea market “show” will be as follows: Actors: Flea Market Sellers; Audience: Flea Market Buyers; Producers/Directors: Flea Market Managers; and Stage: Flea Market Setting.

Although any single instance of social interaction may be interpreted as a performance, for such interaction to become a fully-developed “show” (as in a successful flea market “show”) it must complete all five stages of development (Idea Formulation, Selection/Creation of an Action Area or Stage, Recruitment of Actors, Enactment and Redefinition of the Situation). These five stages of development may be seen as the five acts of the flea market “show” and are structured in a way similar to a small business startup process found in the conventional retail economy.

Act One, Idea Formulation, begins with the flea market seller’s motivation for entering the flea market business. This motivation is usually spurred by an idea of a merchandise item that the flea market seller believes will be profitable.

Based on observations in the Lee County Flea Market setting, I gathered that ideas may be formulated from: 1) A connection in the wholesale industry, where the flea market seller is able to acquire large quantities of an item and believes the resale value to be profitable. Such “wholesaler” businesses observed at the Lee County Flea Market included: socks; towels; sunglasses; t-shirts; hats; medical scrubs; shoes; outdoor furniture; car/truck accessories; jewelry; and bakery goods. 2) A carpentry or artistry talent to produce hand-crafted merchandise. Such “dealer” businesses observed at the Lee County Flea Market included: handcrafted jewelry; personalized belts, buckles and wallets; hand sewn and personalized tote bags and purses; and screen-printed and

airbrushed hats and t-shirts. Or, 3) Adequate time and resources to collect, fix-up and sell others' second-hand goods. Such "marketer" businesses observed at the Lee County Flea Market included: antique furniture; glassware and china; refurbished farm equipment; lawnmowers and tools; cassette and VHS tapes; used paperback books; secondhand clothing, shoes and accessories; housewares; and children's toys.

Idea formulation may be as simplistic as a single image, going into the flea market business as a hobby, for fun or for extra income, generally specializing in one merchandise item in one flea market setting. Or, idea formulation may be as complex as a script, going into the flea market business with the intention of making it a career, specializing in many merchandise items in several flea market circuits. Flea market sellers motivated by a single image idea will generally fall into the "day sellers" category, one who is "usually just cleaning out his or her attic or garage and disposing of unwanted items" (Cooper 1988: 152). This type of flea market seller is extremely negotiable and is generally more concerned with getting rid of unwanted items than making a large profit. For example, through conversation I learned that every weekend the owner of a local bakery brings unsold items from his store to sell at the Lee County Flea Market. He sees this venture as a weekend hobby, with more social than economic benefits, and so is happy to sell at any price rather than throw the unsold items away. In contrast, flea market sellers motivated by a script idea will generally fall into the "professional sellers" category, one who sells at the flea market for the sole purpose of making money (Cooper 1988: 152). For example, another conversation with a "marketer" at the Lee County Flea Market revealed that at one time flea marketing for him was just a hobby, selling one weekend a month during the summertime, but after seeing his profits elevate enough to

support the business full-time, he now “flea-markets” as a career. Although most flea market sellers fall into one of these two categories, there will be those who are motivated by an idea that falls somewhere inbetween, such as a theme or plot.

Act Two, Selection/Creation of Action Area or Stage, begins with seeking and locating a site for the action area or stage. Possibilities are limitless of location sites for flea market settings: school gymnasiums, community centers, halls, hotels, motels, churches, parking lots, open fields, lawns, empty buildings, drive-in movie theaters, sports arenas, race tracks, etc. Potential flea market sellers may most readily locate flea market settings in their regional areas by utilizing internet directories, newspaper classifieds and local advertising. After locating regional markets, potential flea market sellers will then visit these markets to get an idea of what merchandise items are already being sold (prospective competition), what merchandise items would be new or unique to the area, if there exists a buyer demand for the type of merchandise he or she wishes to sell and so on.

Once a flea market setting is chosen (or flea market circuit is chosen for more professional sellers), the placement of the seller’s booth/space is crucial to the success of his or her new business, because where a seller is located in the flea market is oftentimes more important than what he or she is actually selling. Most flea market sellers would consider these to be prime locations in any flea market setting: “near the main entrance, in a covered area, in a regular location” (LaLone et al. 1993: 8-9), “on a corner or at the end of a row with cross aisles, near a food concession, directly across the aisle from the entrance to the women’s restroom” (Cooper 1988: 71), “or in close proximity to parking”

(Cooper 1988: 34). In addition, a seller should also familiarize themselves with high traffic areas or the best areas to display his or her specific type of merchandise item.

The final step in seeking and locating an action area or stage is to contact flea market management on how spaces/booths are distributed and reserved, as well as rental amounts. At the Lee Country Flea Market two types of “booths/spaces” exist: outdoor and sheltered. Through observation and casual conversation I learned that, outdoor booths/spaces are reserved on a first-come-first-served basis. With only a limited number of booths provided by management, many of these sellers opt to bring their own display booths, trailers or tents and set up along the outside edge of the property. High traffic times for these “outdoor” sellers seems to be early in the morning, usually the first four hours of each business day and during milder weather conditions. On the other hand, sheltered booths/spaces are of two types and are reserved on a more permanent basis. The sheltered section of the Lee Country Flea Market is organized in a horse-shoe pattern with two rows of booths, one lining the inside and one lining the outside. The inside lining of booths are the most permanent and feature not only a display booth, but also a locked storage space in which many sellers store their merchandise during nonbusiness hours. The outside lining of booths are occupied by more semi-permanent sellers with a majority of these sellers not storing their merchandise from week to week. High traffic times for these “sheltered” sellers seems to be the winding down of each business day and during more extreme weather conditions.

After the action area or stage location has been secured, the next scene in Act Two will be to construct the actual structure. When contacting flea market management on how spaces/booths are allocated and priced, the seller will also inquire about materials

provided by management (booth, table, chairs, etc.). If none are provided, sellers will need to buy a display table, trailer or tent in which to exhibit their merchandise.

Similarly, in the third and final scene of Act Two, flea market sellers construct their “stage” in a way so as to make provisions for the audience, utilizing display and merchandising techniques. Sellers recognize that their merchandise does not sell itself and so utilize various display and merchandising techniques to gain advantages on their competition (LaLone et al. 1993: 7). Such display and merchandising techniques may include: 1) Making their merchandise as easily accessible and aesthetically appealing as possible, by creating an attractive, eye-catching display. For example, “some colors attract attention while others tend to blend into the background” (Cooper 1988: 44). Or in some cases, sellers will hang signs over their tables or booths indicating either a company name or the nature of merchandise being sold. An example observed at the Lee County Flea Market of such “merchandising/display techniques” would be the Dixie motif booths that fly rebel flags upwards to thirty feet over their trailer or tent to advertise their merchandise specialty. And, 2) Because the flea market setting offers a great deal of seller freedom, many “express their individuality [by creating] a ‘catch’ to sell their merchandise” (LaLone et al. 1993: 7). Such advertisements may range from “a theme, such as Disney memorabilia, to supporting a charitable cause, such as ‘Save the Dolphins’ or ‘Hurricane Relief’” (LaLone et al. 1993: 7). An example observed at the Lee County Flea Market of such “merchandising/display techniques” would be the Native American memorabilia booth, specializing in Southern Indian heritage antiques.

For Act Three, Recruitment of Actors and Training for Roles, in the case of the flea market “show”, the recruitment of actors will constitute the procurement of

merchandise. This may be accomplished through outside sources such as tag sales, auctions, estate sales, thrift stores and the like, while much is bought and sold within the flea market setting, seller to seller. (It should be noted, however, that larger flea market businesses which have been very successful financially do hire additional part-time help (or recruit more actors) to man their booths at various flea market locations.)

In the same manner, training for roles will constitute being thoroughly educated on one's merchandise, which will, in turn, further the seller's expertise in the bargaining process. To be successful both financially and socially in the flea market setting, a flea market seller must not only be thoroughly educated on his or her own merchandise, but that of competitors and items of general popularity in the area. "This requires much research on the part of the [seller] in order to be able to recognize marketable merchandise, avoid misvaluing an item he or she plans to sell, and recongiz[e] items being sold at undervalued prices" (LaLone et al. 1993: 6). A seller may expand his or her merchandise knowledge using several resources: visiting museums, fine antique stores and auction houses to study prices; reading trade show, collectible, antique and home magazines; and speaking with other flea market sellers of their experiences.

In Act Four, the Enactment, the potential flea market seller has completed preparations for his or her performance and the flea market "show" begins. Once sellers become "regulars" at a particular flea market or circuit of markets, they begin to learn the "do's and don'ts" of flea market selling, strategies utilized by flea market buyers and the "ins and outs" of bargaining, all of which can only come with experience. In addition, they will also become familiar with the general rules of conduct or social norms which govern the flea market setting.

In the fifth and final Act, the New Definition of the Situation, flea market sellers become more experienced and a period of appraisal will follow concerning “the effect of the action on the definition of the situation, both for the actors (sellers) and for the audience (buyers)” (Hare and Blumberg 1988: 4). At this point, sellers may decide to return to conventional retail or grow their flea market business further, by expanding clientele and merchandise selection.

The “Formalities” and “Informalities” of Flea Marketing

In Goffman’s dramaturgical analogy, the front region in all social interaction is the “parallel of the stage front in a theatrical performance” (Ritzer 2004: 212). In the case of the flea market setting, the front region constitutes all physical attributes (display tables, booths, signs, merchandise) of the flea market “show” as well as any and all public behavior.

Within the front region, of particular importance to the flea market seller is his or her appearance to flea market buyers as well as his or her manner in selling technique. Flea market sellers go to great lengths to “market themselves and their merchandise” (LaLone et al. 1993: 6). A popular strategy employed to do so is to take on an adverse façade from their everyday appearance by “dressing down,” or conveying an image of being “unsuccessful or poor” (LaLone et al. 1993:6). “Wealthier [buyers] have also picked up on this strategy and wear ‘disguises’ in order to” (LaLone et al. 1993: 6-7), strike harder bargains with flea market sellers. These buyers realize that wearing finer clothing and expensive accessories will tip off flea market sellers to the fact that they do not, in actuality, need a discount, but are accustomed to and financially able to pay the full asking price, if not more.

Similarly, flea market sellers realize that the manner of their selling technique has a great deal to do with how successful or unsuccessful they will be financially in the flea market setting. Similar to “dressing down”, many times a seller’s “sales tactic” is very different than his or her personality in everyday life. A flea market seller will generally display one of two types of selling techniques. The first, a harsh, aggressive manner “may give the impression that the actor [seller] expects to be the one who will initiate the verbal interaction and direct its course” (Goffman 1959:24). With a harsh, aggressive manner the flea market seller will be thought of as a “hard-sell,” a tough bargainer, or a more experienced and professional salesperson. The second, a humble, apologetic manner “may give the impression that the actor [seller] expects to follow the lead of others, or at least that he [or she] can be lead to do so” (Goffman: 1959: 24). With a humble, apologetic manner the flea market seller will be thought of as a “soft-sell,” one who befriends the buyer, or a rather timid and inexperienced salesperson.

It was observed that a majority of the sellers at the Lee County Flea Market display the latter sales technique, the “soft sell, which is not at all the aggressive nature of selling that one would expect in this setting. Most sellers tended to quote prices of what was being browsed as more of an aside than an actual selling technique. For instance, “Just so you know...all hats are five dollars.” In fact, in many cases, I, the buyer, had to be the aggressor on pricing, by being the first to speak to the seller and not the other way around. For this reason, a good number of sellers at the Lee County Flea Market could be classified into the selling technique category of “sitting sellers.” By “sitting sellers” I mean that most sellers encountered sat behind their booth/table and only spoke when

spoken to; it was rare to find a seller standing or being the slightest bit “physically aggressive” with buyers who passed by.

Opposite this front region, in Goffman’s dramaturgical analogy, the back region is a “place to which the actors can retire to prepare themselves for their performance. Backstage or offstage, in theater terms, the actors can shed their roles and be themselves”(Ritzer 2004: 212). During a theatrical performance the back region is located adjacent to the front region, but also cut off from it. In the case of the flea market setting no actual back region may exist, so two alternatives emerge. Because many times a flea market setting will not contain a physical back region, “show” preparation is oftentimes conducted at a seller’s residence. Or the back region may be simply a differential in time, before the flea market opens and after the flea market closes.

Based on observations at the Lee County Flea Market, the more permanent flea market sellers had very distinct back regions as compared to the alternative back regions of the more temporary sellers. The more permanent or “regular” sellers, usually located along the inside lining of sheltered booths, had access to their own personal locked storage facility in which many stored their merchandise during nonbusiness hours. This storage facility acted as their “physical” back region before, during and after the flea market “show.” The more temporary sellers, however, usually located along the outside lining of sheltered booths or in outdoor spaces, had access to only alternative back regions, those being in some other setting than the actual flea market “show” or before and after business hours each day.

In the flea market setting, two types of behaviors characterize the back region, whether physical or time differential. The management of merchandise is the first type of

behavior. In the back region, merchandise must be procured, either through handcrafting, rummaging or buying. Then merchandise must be made ready to sell, which oftentimes includes a period of “fixing up” and pricing. Language behavior also characterizes the back region. In the absence of buyers (the audience), flea market sellers display informal and familiar language behavior only privy to them while in the back region. During this time, sellers will be comfortable to express opinions, either personal or business-related, use nicknames and engage in questionable behavior such as smoking or the telling of elicited jokes or life experiences.

Discrepancies in Flea Marketing

In addition to the “cast of characters” already mentioned, there exist supporting actors and actresses in any flea market setting. These supporting roles are deemed discrepant roles because they are neither main actors, audience members nor outsiders. Although not based upon specific individuals found in the Lee County Flea Market setting, these theoretical “discrepant roles” were created by a weaving together of Goffman’s dramaturgical analogies with broad observations made in the field setting.

An informer is one who is an accomplice of the flea market seller. The informer often acts before buyers (audience members) are present, before the flea market opens and after the flea market closes. This is done to lower suspicion. The informer will strive to ensure the trust of other sellers by pretending to be a seller himself or herself. The informer ensures the trust of fellow sellers in order to gain information on competitors’ merchandise and prices to inform the buyers that his or her accomplice’s merchandise is better and cheaper.

Similar to the informer, the shill is one who pretends to be flea market buyer (audience member), but is really in an alliance with the seller. The shill takes on this role in order to influence the behavior of that seller's audience. By doing so, the shill acts as a "model audience member" setting the stage for bargaining. The motivation of the shill is to make merchandise items appear more valuable and wanted by driving up prices during the bargaining process.

Similar to the informer and shill, the spotter is a flea market seller, or an accomplice of the seller, who scopes out the competition's merchandise, pricing and display techniques to ensure that the he or she is keeping up with the competition, outdoing them and so on.

Almost identical to the informer, the shopper is a flea market seller who pretends to be a buyer in order to gain information on competitors' merchandise and prices. By doing so, the shopper informs buyers that his or her merchandise is of better quality and cheaper than the competition.

The go-between or mediator is one who has loyalties to both flea market buyers and flea market sellers. The best example of a go-between or mediator in the flea market setting would be members of flea market management, who have the best interests of both the buyers and sellers to contend with.

A non-person is one who does not disguise his or her role or intention in the flea market setting. The non-person is present during the flea market "show" but does not participate in it. The best example of a non-person in the flea market setting would be the hired help or family members of a seller who help set up or do grunge work throughout the day but would not be considered "actors" in the actual "show."

A service specialist is one who has back region access but does not take part in the flea market “show” itself. In addition, a service specialist “does not share the risk, guilt or satisfaction of presenting before an audience (buyers) the performance to which he [or she] has contributed” (Goffman 1959: 153-155). The best example of a service specialist in the flea market setting would be a merchandise source connection, such as a wholesale manufacturer, handicraft artist or carpenter, etc.

A confidant is one who counsels the flea market seller. Typically, confidants remain outside of the flea market “show” and possess knowledge of the “show” only through a seller’s accounts. Examples of confidants in the flea market setting may include: 1) Fellow sellers not in direct competition with that particular seller; (For instance, a “wholesaler” confiding in a “dealer” for advice or to vent.) 2) Family members; or 3) Sellers from other flea market regions.

When a flea market business grows large enough, “teams of sellers” may exist. One team member may sell in one location and the other in another location. Or they may sell at the same location, but on different weekends. Colleagues, then, are part of a larger flea market business but do not operate at the same time or at the same location.

A renegade is one who has worked with a flea market seller in the past, either as a colleague or apprentice, but who has since left the “team”. The renegade will use skills learned to start his or her own flea market business in direct competition with the ex-colleague.

“Defensive” and “Offensive” Flea Marketing

According to Goffman, the aim of any performance in social interaction is for the actor to convey an idealized image of himself or herself, by creating a desired and

favorable impression before the audience. This sentiment holds true in the flea market setting. Flea market sellers utilize selling, merchandising and display techniques as well as quality and selection of merchandise to present an idealized image of their flea market business to captivate the audience, the flea market buyer. This favorable impression, however, is not possible without defensive measures used by flea market sellers to save their own “show” and offensive or protective measures used by flea market buyers to help sellers save their own “show.”

Although specific measures were not directly observed in the Lee County Flea Market setting, these theoretical concepts were derived from a weaving together of Goffman’s impression management analogies and broad observations made in the field setting. First, three factors constitute defensive measures used by flea market sellers to save their own “show”: Dramaturgical Loyalty, Dramaturgical Discipline and Dramaturgical Circumspection.

The basic application of dramaturgical loyalty to sellers in the flea market setting is “sincerity in one’s merchandise.” A flea market seller, as with any type of salesperson, can only be successful financially if they believe in the product they are selling. To do so, the flea market seller must: accept and abide by the social norms or rules of conduct that govern the flea market setting; concentrate on selling the quality of their merchandise and rely less on mystification techniques; and avoid denouncing other sellers and their merchandise and therefore maintaining a good “word of mouth” reputation.

The basic application of dramaturgical discipline to sellers in the flea market setting is “striving to be professional at all times, in a rather ‘unprofessional’ and chaotic business setting.” Unlike mainstream retail, where business owners “run the show” and

are fairly capable of containing and preventing scenes, in such an unstructured setting such as the flea market, the flea market seller must be able to cope with change on the spur of the moment. Such instances may include: extreme weather conditions, customer disputes, inappropriate situations and behavior, etc. In addition, not only does the flea market seller need to be confident in his or her own merchandise knowledge and expertise, but the flea market seller needs to be seasoned enough to gauge his or her selling technique to suit each customer, their personality and buying motive. Above all, the importance of dramaturgical discipline in the flea market setting is self-control, which is the essential element a new business owner must possess to be successful financially in any retail economy.

The basic application of dramaturgical circumspection to sellers in the flea market setting is “perfecting the bargaining process.” In the process of perfect one’s own selling technique, a seller must first choose a merchandise item to sell that he or she believes in wholly. Next, the seller must choose a flea market area in which to sell where their merchandise item is most likely to succeed. Factors to consider in this instance would be an area or market where he or she will be less likely to be challenged by prospective competition or on their product knowledge and expertise. In addition, flea market sellers need to be aware of exactly how far to stretch or elaborate the truth about an merchandise item in order to sell it, but at the same time knowing exactly how far one should not stray from the truth should they be dealing with a buyer who is knowledgeable about the particular item being sold. In order to avoid stretching the truth in front of the wrong buyer or getting into a haggling match with a skilled bargainer, many flea market sellers will price their merchandise to try and avoid such occurrences. For instance, as observed

in the Lee County Flea Market setting, one seller automatically “cut” the prices when quoting to an inquiring buyer, “This one is \$25, but I’ll take \$18 for it,” or “This one is \$20, but I’ll take \$15 for it.” Flea market sellers might also take advantage of being “new” to an area or market, therefore assuming buyers will be less likely to question their expertise (not knowing how much expertise they really possess). Similarly, sellers must take into account that buyers may have consulted flea market price books before arriving at the flea market or may have shopped around at various flea markets and are very knowledgeable about the specific items they are looking for. Sellers also need to consider that buyers may not only be knowledgeable from “external sources,” such as the Internet, flea market price books or from shopping around at other flea markets in the area, but that it is possible they gleaned information from “internal sources” such as fellow flea market buyers or speaking with other flea market sellers at another time and place.

On the other hand, offensive or protective measures used by flea market buyers to help sellers save their own “show” are extremely crucial to the to the successfulness of the performance of a flea market seller, because the defensive measures of impression management are not enough to guarantee success. To aid flea market sellers, buyers exhibit such offensive or protective measures on their behalf in several ways. First, flea market buyers “voluntarily refrain” from entering into a seller’s personal and/or private back region, whether physical or time differential. But if they find that they are about to enter such a region “they often give those already present some warning, in the form of a message, knock or cough, so that the intrusion can be put off if necessary or the setting hurriedly put back in order and proper expressions fixed on the faces of those present”

(Goffman 1959: 229). Second, if an outsider or flea market buyer not included in the current transaction are present during a sale between a seller and another buyer, because physical isolation cannot be obtained by walls or distance, “effective isolation can at least be obtained by convention, by tactfully acting in an uninterested, uninvolved and unperceiving fashion” (Goffman 1959: 230). Flea market sellers should be weary of this, however, as many “outsiders” may turn into potential buyers once information privy to them by witnessing these other “performances” or transactions is obtained. Third, not only sellers, but also flea market buyers, have a responsibility to adhere to the social norms and rules of conduct that govern the flea market setting. In doing so, the flea market buyer will give these tactful considerations to the seller: the giving of the proper amount of attention and interest; a willingness to hold in check one’s own expertise so as not to introduce too many contradictions, interruptions or demands for attention; the inhibition of all acts or statements that might create a faux pas; and the desire, above all, to avoid a scene. In the same manner, if a flea market seller should make a mistake of some kind, transmitting an inconsistency between the impression wanted and impression given, the flea market buyer should “tactfully ‘not see’ the slip or readily accept the excuse that is offered for it” (Goffman 1959: 231-232). And finally, just as flea market sellers adhere to the rule of conduct that negates seller’s have a sense of social responsibility not to take advantage of a buyer’s naiveté, when it is known that a flea market seller is “new to selling” the flea market buyer should “show extra consideration, refraining from causing the difficulties [he or she] might other[wise] create” (Goffman 1959: 232). Therefore, a flea market buyer should not take advantage of a flea market seller’s naïveté, just as flea market sellers should do the same for a naïve buyer.

Chapter 5, Conclusions, presents a summary of relevant findings, practical, theoretical and empirical implications, as well as recommendations for future research.

V. CONCLUSION

To many the flea market phenomenon is a way of life, to others it is nothing more than a weekend hobby, or it may hold a vast array of sentiments in between. No matter the connection, it is apparent that the flea market phenomenon has created an American subculture, a new national pastime. What drives this subculture is social interaction; interaction between fellow sellers, interaction between fellow buyers, and most importantly, interaction between sellers and buyers. The social interaction between these buyers and sellers' social and economic worlds has shaped the flea market phenomenon into what it is today.

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Erving Goffman outlines a highly imaginative method of analyzing this type of social interaction. Goffman uses a metaphorical theater as his theoretical framework, which inspired the structure of this thesis. Within this framework, social interaction, specifically face-to-face interaction, involves individuals as actors performing for an audience in a scripted manner, while engaging in the art of impression management. As it pertains to the present research, in the flea market setting, social interaction, specifically face-to-face interpersonal interaction, involves flea market sellers as actors performing for flea market buyers, the audience, in a sell-scripted manner, with the intent to influence that audience for profit.

The three main objectives of this thesis have been: 1) To provide general information about the flea market phenomenon. 2) To demonstrate the flea market setting's research potential in the social sciences. And, 3) To further investigate Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy and its application prospective, particularly in a social setting which has not been investigated in this way before. By achieving these objectives this thesis offers practical, theoretical and empirical implications based on field observations in the flea market setting combined with knowledge gained from both previous academic research and flea market handbooks and guidebooks published over the past thirty years.

General information of the flea market phenomenon has been provided specifying: the history of flea marketing, both in Europe and the United States; various types of flea market settings; the profiles of flea market buyers and flea market sellers; merchandise found in the flea market setting and how it is procured; the process of bargaining; strategies employed by flea market buyers and flea market sellers; as well as characteristics of social interaction found in this type of setting. This compilation of information from numerous academic sources is now the most thorough depiction of every aspect of the flea market setting. No other source was discovered that had such a varied and detailed collection of information pertinent not only to flea market sellers and flea market buyers, but to anyone interested in the subject matter. The practical implication of this compilation of material is now there is a central source for information regarding flea market visitors, vendors, management, behind-the-scenes operations, structure, function, societal influence and future prospects. In addition, it can now be inferred that flea markets have a very positive effect on their surrounding

communities. Flea markets do not challenge conventional retail economies, as some might think, because they draw on a different type of buyer, looking for goods they cannot find at any other retail source. Flea markets also draw these different types of buyers from surrounding communities boosting other facets of the local economy. It has become clear that there is room in every community for both types of retail venues.

Through the combining of field observations with knowledge gleaned from flea market handbooks and guidebooks, several theoretical applications or implications have been made relating aspects of Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy to aspects characteristic of the flea market setting. 1) The Performative Nature of Flea Marketing: Although any single instance of social interaction may be interpreted as a performance, for such interaction to become a fully-developed "show" (as in a successful flea market "show") it must complete all five stages or "acts" of development. These five "acts" are structured in a way similar to a small business startup process found in the conventional retail economy and are as follows: Act One, Idea Formulation; Act Two, Selection/Creation of an Action Area or Stage; Act Three, Recruitment of Actors and Training for Roles; Act Four, Enactment; and, Act Five, Redefinition of the Situation. 2) The "Formalities" and "Informalities" of Flea Marketing: In Goffman's metaphorical theater the frontstage is "onstage" before the audience, and the backstage is "offstage" in private. In the case of the flea market setting, the front region, or frontstage, constitutes all physical attributes (display tables, booths, signs, merchandise) of the flea market "show" as well as any and all public behavior. Within the front region, of particular importance to the flea market seller is his or her appearance to flea market buyers as well as his or her manner in selling technique. On the other hand, in the case of the flea

market setting no physical back region, or backstage, may exist, so two alternatives emerge. “Show” preparation may oftentimes be conducted at a seller’s residence. Or, the back region may be simply a differential in time, before the flea market opens and after the flea market closes. Two types of behaviors characterize the back region, whether physical or time differential. The management of merchandise is the first and language behavior is the second. 3) Discrepancies in Flea Marketing: In addition to the main “cast of characters,” there exist supporting actors and actresses in any flea market “show.” These supporting roles are deemed discrepant roles because they are neither main actors, audience members nor outsiders. Flea market discrepant roles will fall into one of ten categories: Informer, Shill, Spotter, Shopper, Go-Between or Mediator, Non-Person, Service Specialist, Confidant, Colleague and Renegade. 4) “Defensive” and “Offensive” Flea Marketing: The aim of any flea market “show” is for the actor, the flea market seller, to convey an idealized image of himself or herself by creating a desired and favorable impression before the audience, the flea market buyer. This favorable impression, however, is not possible without defensive measures used by flea market sellers to save their own “show” and offensive or protective measures used by flea market buyers to help sellers save their own “show.” A flea market seller’s defensive “show”-saving measures may include: Dramaturgical Loyalty: “Sincerity in one’s merchandise;” Dramaturgical Discipline: “Striving to be professional at all times, in a rather ‘unprofessional and chaotic’ business setting;” And, Dramaturgical Circumspection: “Perfecting the Bargaining Process.” A flea market buyer’s offensive or protective “show”-saving measures to aid the flea market seller may include: Voluntarily refraining from entering into private back regions; Displaying effective isolation; Being tactfully

considerate of the seller; and, Adhering to social responsibilities and rules of conduct that govern the flea market setting.

This thesis has demonstrated the flea market setting's research potential in the social sciences so now recommendations for future research and empirical implications will be twofold: 1) Recommendations for future research calling for a closer examination of specific social and economic aspects of the flea market phenomenon. And, 2) Recommendations for future research exploring various applications of Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy in social settings other than the flea market setting.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, significant investigation produced only a limited number of research projects pertaining to the specific direction of this thesis. The first, an anthropological approach, focused on four specific aspects of the Dublin Flea Market. These four aspects included: A classification of vendors; Strategies employed by vendors to maximize economic and social involvement in the flea market; Interaction between social and economic realms; and, Norms or rules of conduct that govern the flea market setting (LaLone, Godoy, Halsall and Matthews 1993: 1-13). The second, an ethnographic approach, focused around three areas of interest: 1) "The dealer or seller of yard sale and/or flea market commodities as an occupational type; 2) The nature of merchandise being sold; And, 3) The nature of interaction found in the market atmosphere" (Miller 1988: 56). The third, also an ethnographic approach, explored the "institutional complexity and sociocultural significance" (Sherry 1990: 13), of the Dalton Valley Flea Market in terms of structural and functional dimensions, specifically informal and festive dialectics (Sherry 1990: 13).

Synthesizing aspects of these three relevant research projects with field research conducted for the purpose of this thesis, several research recommendations can be made calling for a closer examination of specific social and economic aspects of the flea market phenomenon. First, there is great research potential in a more elaborative investigation of the five types of social interaction mentioned in the Dublin Flea Market study. Each of the five (face-to-face interaction, building of relationships, shared identity, social bonds, and collective identity) could easily constitute entire research projects of their own. Narrowing the investigative focus from a broad category of “social interaction” to these very basic levels would not only be pioneer in the study of flea marketing, but could also spur the analysis of other social settings in this manner.

Second, there is great research potential in establishing the social need of the flea market enterprise in today’s economy, an economy “which has been more or less dehumanized by self-service and mass marketing” (Miller 1988: 59). Further investigation and increased public awareness of social and economic norms which govern the flea market setting, (as observed in the Dublin Flea Market study), would not only entice flea market sellers to further uphold these norms, but might draw more consumers to the flea market, where buying and selling is brought back to a more personal and rewarding level.

Third, if analyzed from a Functionalist Perspective, the flea market phenomenon has the potential to elicit numerous latent functions (or secondary benefits) of social and economic importance. Such latent functions could constitute standalone research projects of their own and may include: 1) Networking. Networking in the flea market setting could encompass both financial networking and social networking. With little to no

advertising budget for most flea market operations, and especially for individual sellers, word of mouth/reputation is one of the only avenues by which a seller can grow his or her business. As financial networking flourishes among those who frequent the same flea market circuits season after season, social networking develops as a result. Social networking ties can form between sellers, between buyers, and between buyers and sellers. As this type of relationship may be initiated with financial motives it is not uncommon to hear flea market buyers and sellers refer to each other as “family.”

2) Welfare. The welfare benefits of flea marketing can be seen as twofold. Because flea market prices are substantially lower than retail and a majority of flea market sellers do not include sales tax in their transactions, buyers with limited resources are given a chance at tremendous price cuts on necessities and the ability to afford second-hand luxuries. In addition, merchandise items that do not sell are almost always donated at the end of each business day or market season to a local charity.

3) Recyclable Benefits. In the same manner, the flea market not only gives individuals an outlet by which to get rid of unwanted items, but leftover items are often donated to charitable organizations, and thereby recycling a great deal of items that would normally end up in a landfill.

4) Tax Benefits or Tax Evasion. Although most latent functions of the flea market setting are seen as secondary benefits, not all may be as positive in nature. The same “welfare” benefits that may aide buyers with limited resources in decreasing their spending, while at the same time increasing sellers’ profits, may have long-term negative affects on both deficient sales taxes and fraudulent income taxes. Further investigation into this possible tax evasion tactic is needed.

Fourth, in the flea market setting there is great research potential in the application of Erving Goffman's (1967) theoretical concept of "the nature of deference and demeanor." Focusing primarily on demeanor, "that element of the individual's ceremonial behavior typically conveyed through deportment, dress and bearing, which serves to express to those in his immediate presence that he is a person of certain desirable or undesirable qualities" (Goffman 1967: 77), specific aspects of the buyer and seller strategy "dressing down" or "acting down," as explained in more detail in Chapter 2, can be further investigated. Because demeanor "involves attributes derived from interpretations others make of the way in which the individual handles himself during social intercourse" (Goffman 1967: 78), the complexity of this strategy can be best understood in terms of demeanor and its manipulation on the bargaining process.

And fifth, in the same manner, there is even greater research potential in further investigating the strategy of "dressing down" or "acting down" by applying Erving Goffman's (1963) theoretical concepts of "tightness" and "looseness." By doing so, in addition to explaining how this strategy manipulates the bargaining process, incorporating elements of this strategy into a study's methodology, an observer might be able to accomplish two tasks. 1) By investigating flea market settings in the same clothing, the observer might be able to prevent and control prejudice in impression and interaction treatment. And, 2) By investigating flea market settings in a purposeful variation of clothing, depicting extremes in social class, the observer might be able to witness the different types of reactions and interactions that accompany disparities in "tightness" and "looseness" in clothing, figuratively speaking.

There have been numerous papers published applying Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy to a number of social settings and events. Together these works inspired the objectives of this thesis and abetted in drawing applications between dramaturgical concepts and aspects of the flea market setting. In a similar fashion, recommendations for future research exploring various applications of Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy in social settings other than the flea market setting has led to the proposal of potential application in the cosmetics industry, specifically employees of cosmetic counters located within department stores. This application would be modeled after an unpublished paper by Kelly Kraft (n.d.), in which employees of the Walt Disney Store were studied using an ethnographic approach. It is proposed that a dramaturgical analysis could be applied to at least three aspects characteristic of the cosmetic counter employee and the companies who train them. These applications could include: 1) The use of selling scripts: by classifying stages in the transaction process as scenes in a play, viewing training material and training sessions as preparation backstage for frontstage performances and analyzing the uniformity of cosmetic counters and their employees around the country as a function of a larger dramaturgical team. 2) The use and/or manipulation of staging: by analyzing frontstage and backstage behavior (such as mock role-playing and formality vs. informality) as well as the role that merchandising and display techniques play in the performance being given. And, 3) Tactics of impression management: by necessitating how cosmetic companies use training materials, training sessions, free products and lucrative incentives to ensure their employee's "sincerity in one's performance" (Kivisto 2001: 324).

REFERENCES

- Bohigian, Valerie. 1981. *Successful Flea Market Selling*. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: TAB Books, Inc.
- Brissett, Dennis and Charles Edgley. 1990. *Life As Theater: A Dramaturgical Sourcebook*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Cooper, Jordan L. 1988. *How To Make Cash Money Selling At Swap Meets, Flea Markets, Ect.* Port Townsend, WA: Loompanics Unlimited.
- Copeland, Irene. 1977. *The Flea Market And Garage Sale Handbook*. New York, NY: Popular Library.
- Farberman, Harvey A. 1975. "A Criminogenic Market Structure: The Automobile Industry." *The Sociological Quarterly*. XVI (Autumn): 438-457.
- Fallers, Lloyd. 1962. "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life." *American Anthropologist*. 64 (1) (Part 1): 190-191.
- Flea Market Hub. 2006. "Flea Market Hub and Directory." Retrieved June 10, 2006 (<http://www.keysfleamarket.com/fleamarket/state/alabama.htm>)
- Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava and David Nachmias. 2000. *Research Method in the Social Sciences*. 6th ed. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on The Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1967. *Interaction Ritual*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.

- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc.
- Halperin, Rhoda. 1990. *The Livelihood of Kin*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Hare, Paul A. and Herbert H. Blumberg. 1988. *Dramaturgical Analysis of Social Interaction*. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.
- Karch, Fritz, Brian Harter Andriola, and Ann E. Berman. 2002. *Good Things From Tag Sales and Flea Markets*. New York, NY: Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, Inc.
- Kivisto, Peter. 2001. *Illuminating Social Life: Classical and Contemporary Theory Revisited*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- LaLone, Mary B., Elizabeth Godoy, Diane Halsall, and Diane Matthews. 1993. "Making A Buck: Social and Economic Adaptations In An Appalachian Flea Market." *Appalachian Studies Association Conference*. Presented 1993: 1-13.
- Manning, Phil. 1991. "Drama as Life: The Significance of Goffman's Changing Use of the Theatrical Metaphor." *Sociological Theory*. 9 (1): 70-86.
- Miller, Max H. 1988. "Patterns of Exchange in the Rural Sector: Flea Markets Along the Highway." *Journal of American Culture*. 7: 55-59.
- Ritzer, George. 2005. *Encyclopedia of Social Theory: Volume I*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Ritzer, George and Douglas J. Goodman. 2004. *Sociological Theory*. 6th ed. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Sherry Jr., John F. 1990. "A Sociocultural Analysis of a Midwestern American Flea Market." *The Journal of Consumer Research*. 17 (1): 13-30.

- The Official Directory To U.S. Flea Markets*, edited by the House of Collectibles. 1987.
1st ed. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- The Real Yellow Pages* (Auburn-Opelika). 2006. Bellsouth Advertising and Publishing Corporation.
- Tolley, Emelie and Chris Mead. 1998. *Flea Market Style: Decorating With A Creative Edge*. New York, NY: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.
- Turner, Ronny E. and Charles Edgley. 1976. "Death As Theater: A Dramaturgical Analysis Of The American Funeral." *Sociology and Social Research*. 60 (4): 377-392.
- We Sell The World. 2006. "Alabama Flea Markets, Fairs and Special Events."
Retrieved January 4, 2006 (<http://www.fleamarketguide.com/al.htm>)
- Werner, Kitty. 2002. *The Official Directory To U.S. Flea Markets*, edited by the House of Collectibles. 8th ed. New York, NY: The Crown Publishing Group.
- WI-Fi Technology. 2005. "A Justifiable Classic – Though Not Without Flaws."
Retrieved September 28, 2005 (<http://www.wi-fitechnology.com/WI-Fi-Products-0385094027.html>).
- Yahoo!. 2006. "Yahoo! Local Maps/Yahoo! Driving Directions." Retrieved on June 10, 2006 (<http://maps.yahoo.com>)