

MAKING A BUCK:
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ADAPTATIONS IN AN
APPALACHIAN FLEA MARKET

By
Mary B. LaLone, Elizabeth Godoy,
Diane Halsall, and Deanna Matthews

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Radford University
Radford, VA

Paper presented at the Appalachian Studies Association conference,
Johnson City, TN.
1993

To some people, the mention of flea markets conjures up images of sheer chaos -- crowds of people intermingling to search through hodgepodge displays of junk for bargains and weekend entertainment. To many others, the flea market is a vital part of the Appalachian culture, a flexible socioeconomic arena that presents people with opportunities for adapting to changes in their lives. Adaptation is the process by which people make adjustments that facilitate their survival and success in their environment (Bates and Plog 1991, 15-16). For many Appalachians, the flea market arena provides a multitude of opportunities for vendors to make their livelihood. When times get tough, people can enter into flea market selling to supplement or replace their incomes. The flea market also presents opportunities for people to adapt to social changes in their lives. In this arena people can expand their social networks or pursue a retirement pastime. The flea market provides an adaptive setting for Appalachians to adjust to economic uncertainties and other changes they may face in the 1990s.

This study focuses on the Dublin Flea Market, the principal regional flea market for the New River Valley in southwest Virginia. This biannual flea market is sponsored and run by a charitable organization, the Dublin Lion's Club. Both local and itinerant vendors come to sell, buy and trade in this marketplace, setting up their displays on Friday afternoon, and selling to the public from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Saturday and Sunday. First established seventeen years ago, this marketplace has grown each year, and now attracts approximately 400 vendors and 10,000 customers each weekend it operates. The flea market sponsors and participating vendors claim that the marketplace has especially grown in size over the past 5 years. This growth in the numbers of vendors and customers may reflect recent changes in the economic environment of the New River Valley as hard times grip this region. Unemployment rates for the New River Valley show an overall rise from 7.4% in February 1990 to 9.6% in August 1992, but this includes periods during which unemployment climbed to 10.7% in February 1991 and an 11.3% high in February 1992 (Stowe and Freis 1992, 4). An uncertain economy has been triggered through massive layoffs by the region's major employers, starting with a devastating blow when AT&T closed its regional office in 1990, followed by successive layoffs from 1990 to 1992 at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant/Hercules, Volvo GM Heavy Truck Corporation, Pannill Knitting, and other major employers (Roanoke Times & World-News 1992a, 1992b). The latest blow to the local economy comes with recent layoffs at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant, which brings the total to over 1600 employees laid off as of March 1993 (Freis 1993). As hard times grip the New River Valley, people use flea marketing as a form of economic adaptation in two ways. Many vendors indicate that they entered into marketing when they got laid off their jobs. Customers, also feeling the economic pinch, are attracted to the flea market seeking bargains.

This study, a collaborative team effort by a Radford University anthropology professor and three anthropology students, developed out of an "Economic Anthropology" class project in Fall 1991. Inspired by Rhoda Halperin's (1990) study of flea marketing in the Appalachian region of Kentucky, the project examined the growing phenomena of flea marketing in the New River Valley region of Appalachia. As the project evolved, the focus of our research fell on the Dublin Flea Market, as the largest and principal marketplace in the region. Our research at Dublin began in Fall 1991 by mapping the marketplace and conducting extensive interviews with

the vendors. We returned to the marketplace in the Spring and Fall of 1992, where in addition to mapping and interviewing, we extended our fieldwork to include a powerful anthropological technique known as participant-observation. After scavenging our homes for salable items, we rented a spot and experienced vending ourselves. This technique gave us a much deeper understanding of the flea market culture. Vendors talked to us, befriended us, gave us selling advice, gave us tips about economic strategies, and informed us about the social norms operating in the marketplace.

For us, 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. This paper shows the flea market to be a highly complex arena of social and economic interactions, involving different types of vendors who employ definable economic strategies and adhere to recognized social norms.

TYPES OF VENDORS

The Dublin Flea Market is composed of a variety of shapes, colors, and personalities, but three main types of vendors emerge: wholesalers, dealers, and marketers. We have classified each vendor type according to merchandise they sell, the quantity they sell, how they procure merchandise, how much capital or labor investment they put into flea marketing, and whether their motivation for flea marketing is primarily economic or social. Within each category, some vendors operate on a regional scale, selling primarily in the New River Valley area. Other vendors are itinerant, traveling widely across the country, visiting various markets while following regular annual circuits. There is a vast amount of diversity of vendors and merchandise alike at the Dublin Flea Market. Realizing this, the reader should note that every attempt has been made to preserve this uniqueness and at the same time show the distinguishing features among the categories that we gleaned from our research.

The first category of vendors is the wholesalers. These vendors sell merchandise which they have purchased wholesale in bulk quantity from the factory or from another source. At the flea market they break the bulk, selling each piece individually at lower than retail prices. Usually their displays have large quantities of new merchandise such as socks, posters, cassette tapes, baskets, dresses, purses, shoes, and t-shirts. These vendors make a large capital investment up front to obtain their merchandise in bulk.

Wholesalers tend to occupy low and medium rent spaces which are located in the marketplace center and the periphery, commonly know as "over the hill." Before the marketplace opens to the public, wholesalers drive their trucks and vans into their spaces and sell directly out of their vehicles. Any wholesaler will tell you right up front that their prime motivation for coming to the marketplace is to make a profit. This is quite different from the other categories, dealers and marketers, who will de-emphasize their economic motivation and emphasize their social connections in the marketplace.

One of our informants, Joe, who sells crates of tube socks, represents a typical wholesaler. Joe had grown up near a sock mill in his home town of Mount Arie. After working in the sock mill, he decided to use his experience as an opportunity to develop his own business, which includes manufacturing socks to sell, in addition to purchasing socks in bulk. Joe explains "I started getting into sock sales and then I started buying machinery now I have a little

cooperation of my own". For Joe, flea marketing is a full time job, "four days a week about forty hours" (Project Field Notes 1992).

Joe is an itinerant vendor and goes to other flea markets around the region such as Tazwell, Roanoke, Washington D.C., Pittsburg and Baltimore. Joe's selling techniques are typical of wholesalers. He is mainly concerned with accessibility, making a profit, and claims that he does not bargain. He states "I have one of the lowest prices on the whole East coast. I hardly get any bargainers" (Project Field Notes 1992).

Wholesalers are the newest edition to the Dublin Flea Market. About seventeen years ago, when the Dublin Flea Market first opened, it was strictly an antique show (Project Field Notes 1992). Vendors, especially dealers, who having been selling at this marketplace from the beginning expressed a feeling of resentment towards the wholesalers. Because of their recent arrival into the Dublin Flea Market, wholesalers are looked down upon by the other vendors. This may be a result of wholesalers' different motives and orientations, which are more profit oriented and less socially motivated. According to one dealer "a flea market is no place for new stuff" (Project Field Notes).

The second category of vendors is the dealers. These are vendors who are specialists, focusing on selling one or two types of collectibles and antiques. Although they sell in large quantities, their displays usually contain less merchandise than the wholesalers. Typical items sold by the dealers include silverware, china, glassware, antique jewelry, furniture, coins, and baseball cards. They obtain their merchandise 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 the wholesalers who rely on unloading the majority of their merchandise, dealers may hold onto their merchandise until the right customer appears. Dealers establish strong social relationships with other vendors and use those relationships for an economic advantage. A dealer who needs a particular piece of merchandise might ask a fellow dealer to be on the lookout for that piece, then acquire and hold it for him. Many dealers, having strong ties in the marketplace, retain the best and most expensive spaces. These spaces are located in the covered areas directly inside near the entrance and along the routes of high activity in the marketplace. Location is an invaluable factor for a dealer, since their merchandise tends to be expensive and relatively rare.

Bill is an example of a prominent and prosperous dealer at the Dublin Flea market. As most dealers, he utilizes his social connections within and outside the flea market in order to maximize his profits. He specializes in particular merchandise, especially china and glassware, and is constantly researching in order to keep up the value of his merchandise and the best marketplaces to sell.

The third category of vendors is the marketers. They commonly sell a wide variety of relatively low-cost items: tools, knives, pictures, crafts, toys, pottery, jewelry, and just about anything else one could imagine. Marketers' displays might appear to be a hodgepodge of items because they combine a wide variety of merchandise. Their merchandise tends to consist of either hand-made crafts or second-hand items, which are sold at very low prices. Marketers obtain their merchandise from their attics and garages, yard sales and dumpsters - basically everywhere and anywhere they can find things to sell. Marketers are located throughout the marketplace in lower rent spaces. Very little capital investment is put into fixing up items to sell,

although marketers may invest time and labor in searching for their merchandise. Both monetary and social motivations draw the marketer to the Dublin Flea Market. Many vendors enter into the flea market arena as marketers and may, over time become more involved, reinvest their money, and develop personal styles and strategies.

Marketers have the highest mobility in and out of the marketplace. Anyone given sufficient time and available resources can become a marketer. Marketers do not need to research their merchandise extensively. They can develop a niche in the marketplace, their strength lying in the diversity of the merchandise they sell - many of their items draw the eye and the pocketbook. Other vendors may "use" the marketer as a way of obtaining merchandise. A dealer, for example, may buy out a marketer's table because they know a few really good pieces are bound to be mixed in with the "junk." Junk is not meant as a derogatory term here. Many things marketers sell are worthless by market-value standards, but to another vendor it can be fixed up with a little paint and polish and be resold for three times the price they paid.

One informant, Jane, showed how marketers can be successful. Jane labels herself as a "dumpster diver". When she found she had accumulated three barns full of discarded items, she decided to go to the flea market to try her hand at vending (Project Field Notes 1992). Jane explains:

About three or four years ago I came here for the first time, and made over six hundred dollars in two days. And this was giving the stuff away!! I mean, twenty-five or fifty cents for most of the stuff, I had a bag of junk jewelry that someone gave me thirty dollars for, and it ended up being worth over six hundred dollars. I didn't leave here until 10:00 that night because they were going through all my stuff - the glass people, the book people and the clothing people. I had six truckloads in two days and only went home with one truckload!! (Project Field Notes 1992).

Jane invests very little time into dumpster diving - only about two weeks out of every year - and the money she makes from selling the things she finds helps her family survive. Like other marketers, Jane can easily move in and out of the marketplace structure. All it takes is a flexible lifestyle and accumulated merchandise.

All vendors use the marketplace to serve their individual needs. Some start out as marketers and may, over time, choose to become more socially and economically involved. By enhancing their knowledge about the system as a whole, they may develop more advanced techniques and strategies that will allow them to act more efficiently as vendors in the flea market system.

STRATEGIES

Strategies are planned actions that individual vendors 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 vendor in order to increase the chances of a sale. As such, individual vendors freely develop their own special strategies, to optimize and affirm their place in the socioeconomic networks found within and outside the marketplace. Even though

vendors develop their own strategies, we found commonalities emerging amongst vendor types, which are discussed in this section.

In order to be involved in the socioeconomic network, one must find, and be educated in, particular merchandise. This requires much research on the part of the vendor in order to be able to recognize marketable merchandise, avoid misvaluing an item they plan to sell, and recognizing items being sold at undervalued prices.

Each individual vendor has a different means of procurement. Besides outside sources, the marketplace provides a rich economic arena. Before the marketplace opens, one vendor might buy out another seller's display, which allows them to obtain merchandise to sell or to increase their own stock. Other vendors obtain their merchandise by "picking" through other sellers' merchandise. One dealer, Lance, explains:

We commonly get up at 3:00 in the morning to head for these flea markets and get there before dawn. And we start looking through trucks and stuff with flashlights.

And when someone is unpacking their stuff we will help them and ask them what they want (for exchange of an item) because a lot of the time we find buried treasures (Project Field Notes 1992).

These strategies enable the vendors to trade and buy before the market officially begins, to find desirable items that will enhance their display and bring in a profit higher than their purchase price. Our team was bombarded at 6:00 in the morning, on our first day at the marketplace. Ten to fifteen vendors caught us off guard, and began picking through our boxes and watching us as we unpacked. Some decided to stay and take advantage of our naively priced merchandise, while others went on to greet newly arriving vendors. Much exchange occurs before the marketplace opens and purchased items, such as ours, may in fact exchange hands three or four times in a day.

Many vendors have "helpers" for procuring items. Having a helper gives the vendor time to set up and concentrate on his or her display, gather valuable merchandise, and get an inside look at what items are selling. Most importantly, having a helper allows the vendor to stay open the entire time.

Once the merchandise is obtained the vendors utilize various strategies to maximize their profits. These include ways in which the sellers market themselves and their merchandise. Many vendors take on a different appearance from their everyday lives when they come to the marketplace. They expend a lot of effort to "dress down" and create an image of being unsuccessful and poor. According to Lance:

You'd be surprised at how many of them are well educated and doing this. And they look grubby and they look as if they couldn't afford to buy their next meal. A lot of these ole boys that walk around here with seven days growth on their face don't look like they have a dollar, have eight and ten and fifteen thousand in their pockets (Project Field Notes 1992).

"Acting down" goes hand in hand with "dressing down". The vendors do not carry themselves as if they are successful and live a wealthy lifestyle. Thus, people will be less likely to haggle with their asking prices because they assume they need the money. The wealthier customers have also picked up on this strategy and wear "disguises" in order to strike good deals with vendors. The

customers realize that if they look well and dress well the vendors will assume that they are used to paying a lot for things, and charge them a lot for their merchandise. These customers are often recognized by acquaintances while trying to assume these false identities. Overall the sellers use persuasion and various other means to attract the customers' attention. They sell standing up and strike up conversations and make lighthearted remarks as customers pass by.

The vendors recognize that their items do not sell themselves so they utilize various display techniques. To gain respect and credibility from both the vendors and the customers the sellers make their items easily accessible and aesthetically appealing. Some strategies include displaying clothes on a clothes rack, scattering collectibles on tables, and leaving jewelry out of their cases so people can handle them. This strategy promotes quick exchanges of cash and impulse buying, since the customers already have the desired items at hand. To make their merchandise more appealing many vendors 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. Our group witnessed one dealer strategically purchase a silver spoon priced at \$10 knowing that he could polish it and sell it for \$40.

Other important strategies used by vendors to enhance their display involves combining and breaking apart resources. As an example, one vendor decided to frame a 1933 calendar of Walt Disney quoted as saying "I am not interested in being a billionaire." He explains:

I had this nice frame, it had a baby in it by the way, I kind of felt bad taking the baby out because it just fit in their beautifully, but I said I need the money more than I need the baby, and so I took the baby out and put Disney in there (Project Field Notes 1992).

He then placed the framed picture with two other items and sold it as a package. By combining resources, the seller actually enhances his or her display and increases the chances of selling more merchandise. Vendors who "break sets" resell individual pieces in order to receive the maximum amount possible for each. This strategy is often used with china and glassware and is very popular because many of the customers, including other vendors, are looking for their "missing pieces."

Since the market offers such freedom, many vendors express their individuality and create a "catch" to sell their merchandise. These advertisements range from a theme, such as Disney memorabilia, to supporting a charitable cause, such as "Save The Dolphins" or "Hurricane Hugo Relief." One vendor, Edna, responds:

I'd like to work up in my business to the point that I could honestly tell my customers that a certain percentage of what I make goes to my favorite charities. I'm not at that point yet, but I certainly respect a couple of companies that I've seen that do that. That's certainly one of my goals (Project Field Notes 1992).

Serving a charitable cause attracts customers and boosts sales because the customers will feel justified spending their money if they feel they are supporting a charitable cause. Vendors 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 and quality items at the lowest cost possible.

It may be said that where a vendor sells is just as important as what he or she is selling. An important strategy is to obtain a space near the entrance, in the center of the marketplace, called the infield or in any covered area, such as the barn. Having a space near the entrance, makes the vendor's merchandise more readily available to arriving customers who are eager to shop and find "hidden treasures." The customers usually have something in mind to purchase before they get to the marketplace and are more likely to buy the first bargain they see rather than the last. The covered areas, such as the barn, gives the customers shelter, and during bad weather the vendors greatly increase the exposure of their merchandise to a large volume of potential buyers, while protecting their goods. Being in the same spot year after year makes the vendor more memorable and subsequently available to the customers repeatedly. It also allows the vendors and customers to get to know each other and form strong socioeconomic ties within and outside the marketplace.

There is a lot of competition for the choice spaces, thus the vendors utilize many explicit strategies for obtaining and holding their spaces. The organizers of the flea market say that they do not play favorites and that spaces are assigned on a first come, first serve basis. However they told us that they do reserve spots for people that have been selling there the longest and that have had the same spots for years. Our studies show that the vendors who have sold at the marketplace the longest have seniority over these spaces, and have them reserved year after year. When we asked the vendors what they did with their profits, almost all of them replied that they immediately reinvested in their spaces.

Outside vendors can acquire the choice spaces if they register for a slot very early in the year, become an apprentice to an experienced vendor, or if another vendor does not renew his or her space. The latter is very unlikely since the vendors have their own strategies for maintaining their spaces. Most vendors participate on a biannual basis but if they cannot attend the flea market they rely on their "helpers" to sell their merchandise and most importantly to reserve their space.

In order to get a more detailed understanding of the strategies used by vendors, our project set up an anthropological experiment designed to trace the long-range strategies used by Bill, the dealer mentioned previously, who agreed to be our informant. The experiment involved tracing the procedure that Bill used to acquire a set of china from us, and then to resell that china for a profit. We found that Bill utilizes a lot of explicit strategies in order to procure merchandise, strengthen his socioeconomic relationships and maximize his profits. Before attending a marketplace Bill does research by reading books on the values of china, silver and furniture. He informed us that he spends up to \$200 a year on research books alone. He arrives at the marketplace early in the morning looking for underpriced items that will enhance his display. Once he obtains these items he uses strategies to maximize his profit. He uses "trade papers" to gain information on likely selling sites, uses trade journals to gain information on where to acquire certain merchandise, and he calls on his social ties with people who specialize in "matching" buyers and sellers of china and silver services. While picking through our merchandise, Bill had spotted a Bavarian china set that we had naively priced at \$200. Strategically he bought it, knowing all along that he could easily "break up" the set and turn his purchase into an almost \$500 profit. Six months later, when we met him again, he revealed how he had broken up the set, and immediately regained his \$200 purchase price by selling the serving set alone through a matching service. He next received \$400 for selling the dinner set through

another matching service, and another \$90 for selling four parfait cups and saucers at another marketplace. In the Fall of 1992, six months after his purchase, he had two bowls left from the set and had net a \$490 profit.

As mentioned, dealers such as Bill, occupy the choice spaces at the marketplace. They participate on a regular basis, some for the last ten to fifteen years, and have established strong, personalized relationships with neighboring vendors and regular customers. Of all the vendor types, the dealers tend to have the most valuable merchandise and tend to develop the most economic strategies for making a buck, while maintaining the choice spaces at the marketplace. They rely on helpers and research to procure items and they use multiple strategies to market themselves and their merchandise. Wholesalers tend to market their products on a more independent basis, rather than utilizing social connections, and their strategies tend to focus primarily on accessibility and enhancing the appearance of their displays. They use the strategy of buying in bulk from factories, rather than procuring merchandise at the marketplace. The marketers are more likely to utilize strategies that focus on enhancing themselves and their merchandise and are the least to be concerned only with a profit. In addition to making a buck, they are there to enjoy the atmosphere and practice their hobbies.

INTERACTION BETWEEN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REALMS

The interaction between peoples' social and economic worlds is what most shapes the Dublin Flea Market. The marketplace has a small town atmosphere, where people negotiate and interact on a face to face basis. In the flea market, economic exchange is intermingled with social exchange and moderated by social norms. This Appalachian marketplace bears more resemblance to the open-air marketplaces found outside the United States than it does to the world of non-personal mall economics customary within our country.

The marketplace is used as a meeting place, and is composed of vast networks of social communication between those who visit it. Both vendors and customers visit this biannual market year after year, and in some cases have been doing so for more than ten years. This regular visitation promotes the establishment of many different relationships. Many vendors become good friends with one another, such as our dealer case study, Bill, who has set up next to the same couple for a number of years. Their friendship has extended beyond the market; Phil and Sue have been known to call on Bill in times of personal hardship while in their hometown.

There is a pervasive feeling of friendliness surrounding this marketplace. Vendors can be seen relaxing in lawn chairs, or excitedly and interestedly talking to customers or fellow vendors. The atmosphere is one of enjoyment, unlike a hectic shopping trip through a crowded city mall. By and large, a sense of shared identity exists in that, if you are at this marketplace, either as a vendor or customer, you automatically have a shared interest or hobby with everyone around you. Trips to the flea market are not always a necessity, they are largely enjoyable outings. People want to look at everything they possibly can, either searching for a bargain, a rare collectable, or some unique taste or whim they may have. 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.

Bartering and bargaining also serve to characterize the marketplace atmosphere in both central Appalachia and non-industrial countries. These vast social interactions that take place amongst vendors and customers provide strong social bonds that are not apparent in the broader economy.

Specifically, the customer, in purchasing a good from a vendor actually feels appreciated, the smiles and thanks that the vendor offers are sincere; many times, unless the patron frequents very small businesses, the transaction that occurs is not direct, in that there exists a middle man between the producer of the good and the buyer. In living through the whole transaction, one walks away from the vendors' spot feeling happy, both at having obtained a want or need, as well as having made the vendor happy.

Drawing on this, a closeness becomes apparent, a collective identity begins to exist between vendors, as evidenced by them being able to ask each other to keep an eye on their spots should they need to leave for a while. Many times, as customers, we would walk up to a group of displays where it was difficult to distinguish which vendor belonged to which display.

Seeing as how these interactions and transactions exist on such a highly personal level, it only stands to reason that prices on items become negotiable. In the larger economy, a business owner does not stand to lose too much if a person decides not to buy something, but at the flea market level, a vendor would more readily choose to make a gain by docking a dollar or two rather than risk losing a sale. Ultimately, isn't this what life ought really be about - getting what we need at a cost we can afford? Not too many people walk away hurting at the flea market.

Perhaps it could be said that Appalachian flea markets pick up where the broader United States economy leaves off. H. Max Miller, an associate Professor in the Sociology department at the University of Georgia picks up on a similar theme in his 1988 study of northern Georgia flea markets, entitled "Patterns of Exchange in the Rural Sector: Flea Markets Along the Highway," published in the Journal of American Culture. After his extensive study he comes to the following three conclusions:

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.
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.
3. Exchange activity at this level satisfies a number of different needs, for example, a market for used and unwanted goods, an off the record informal cash exchange that yield 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 the sellers, especially for those who are retired or not connected to the formal economy.

Highly personalized relationships develop between vendors, and between vendors and customers, especially if the customers frequent the same vendors spot season after season and make purchases from them. As with any repeat interaction between individuals and groups, certain norms that distinguish these relationships begin to emerge.

Norms are defined as rules that define and regulate acceptable behavior in a culture. These norms serve an extremely important function at this marketplace. It could be said that they "keep the market in check," both socially and economically. They do this by reflecting a culture which is rather specific to Appalachians - it is a culture more composed of thoughtfulness, modesty and genuineness than that of much of the rest of mainstream, urban America. These norms seem to be quietly understood in an almost unspoken manner by regular vendors at the Dublin marketplace. This seems to occur in light of seasons of active participation in flea market settings, and a particular culture seems to pervade many, if not all marketplaces in this region of the New River Valley. All of these norms work and fit together, therefore, no certain order exists in which they should be stated or read. They are as follows:

1. Do not raise prices on merchandise once the asking prices have been set and displayed, although lowering them is fine, however.
2. Do not sell the same items for less than another vendor, especially if they are close in proximity or will be returning to the same spot the following year or season.
3. Do not talk down another vendor or their merchandise, especially if the customer could have gotten the same item from you for a lower price.
4. Keep money matters quiet - do not brag about how much money you are making or inquire about others earnings or income taxes.
5. Trust exists, vendors can leave their spots in care of neighboring vendors should they need to. Merchandise and spots are safe overnight should vendors leave, or be sleeping.
6. Spots are designated by specific footage, therefore a vendor should always stay within his bounds. Any violation or infraction of space will likely result in a riff with a neighbor.
7. Stating appraised values of items to a customer is not acceptable, although stating them to another vendor is.
8. Mark-ups on items are expected, therefore bargaining over prices is acceptable, especially with dealers' and marketers' items, where monetary values are not necessarily fixed but fluctuate according to buyer demand.
9. There is an honor system present, and a certain percentage of vendors earnings go to the management at the end of the day.
10. There is a sense of social responsibility not to take advantage of a customer's naivete.
11. All sales are final. You cannot go back to a vendor to haggle with them if you think you were cheated or ripped off.
12. If a vendor gets the price they are asking for an item, it is a fair deal, even if the buyer makes a sizable profit by reselling the item. This is the name of the game!
13. Vendors tend to set up reciprocal relationships with one another and customers, meaning if a vendor 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 customer. In a sense, this assures them of making some money, and furthers social relationships. This is especially true with the dealers.

In summary, it must be pointed out that all norms do not apply to all types of vendors. Most active following and understanding of the said norms seem to occur among the vendor categories delineated as dealers and marketers, which comprise the bulk of the marketplace. These norms are highly significant to the operating of the marketplace as a social and economic

arena. The market place is quite fitting in the Central Appalachian region in light of the currently declining economic situation. Unemployment rates for the New River Valley show an overall rise from 7.4% in February 1990 to 9.6% in August 1992 - this includes periods during which it rose as high as 11.3%. An uncertain economy has been triggered through massive layoffs by the region's major employers, starting with a devastating blow when AT&T closed its regional office in 1990, followed by successive layoffs from 1990 through 1993 at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant, Volvo GM Heavy Truck Corporation, Pannill Knitting, and other major employers. This brings the total to just over 1300 employees laid off as of March 1993. Manufacturing jobs - the kind with health and retirement benefits, a paycheck large enough to feed a family and occasional overtime pay to pad savings accounts - are disappearing from the New River Valley and elsewhere. Jerry Barnett, a supervisor with the Virginia Employment Commission, said only one third of the 1,743 jobs listed in the New River Valley last year were for production work. He says a few years back it would have been at least twice that.

CONCLUSION

While an outsider may simply see chaos when visiting an Appalachian flea market, an examination below the surface reveals a very different world -- a world of social order and economic purpose. The Appalachian flea market is an arena for socioeconomic interaction where different types of vendors come together to sell their wares, combining economic purpose with the pleasures of social interaction. Vendors have developed strategies to increase their chances for economic gain, yet an Appalachian marketplace is not guided solely by pure profit orientation. Vendors recognize and adhere to a set of social norms which serve to moderate economic behavior in the marketplace. All of this facilitates a comfortable social environment for economic exchange; a marketplace that feels removed from the frenzied world of capitalist economics which prevails throughout the rest of the nation.

The Appalachian flea market is a flexible world admitting any who wish to try their hand at vending -- either part or full time, as a temporary measure or as a permanent venture, as an income supplement or an alternative form of income. It is a place requiring few job credentials and little capital investment. It presents opportunities for people to adjust to changes in their lives, such as a loss of a job or the transition to retirement. The flexibility and friendliness of the flea market make it a viable form of socioeconomic adaptation for people in the New River Valley and other regions of Appalachia faced with changing economic situations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Freis, Robert. 1993. Arsenal Rocked Again: Fallout From Blast Leaves 350 Jobless. Roanoke Times and World-News, March 6, 1993. P. 1.
- Halperin, Rhoda. 1990. The Livelihood of Kin: Making Ends Meet "TheKentucky Way. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Plog, Daniel G. and Fred Plog. 1991. Human Adaptive Strategies. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Miller, H. Max. 1988. Patterns of Exchange in the Rural Sector: Flea Markets Along the Highway. *Journal of American Culture* 7:55-59.
- Roanoke Times and World-News. 1992a New River Valley Economy. Special Supplement, Roanoke Times and World-News, January 26, 1992. Pp. 1-40.
- Roanoke Times and World-News. 1992b Making it 1992. Economy Section, Roanoke Times and World-News, January 26, 1992. Pp. 1-22.
- Stowe, Michael and Robert Freis. 1992. Hanging in There: First in a 3-part series on Problems Faced by the New River Valley's Unemployed. Roanoke Times and World-News, New River Valley Current Section, October 24, 1992. P. 1, 4.