UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones

5-1-2015

What Happens in Las Vegas? How Exhibitors Use the Tradeshow Floor and Social Venues to Facilitate Business

Chrissy L. Nanton
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, chrissy.nanton@unlv.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations

Part of the Business Commons, and the Work, Economy and Organizations Commons

WHAT HAPPENS IN LAS VEGAS? HOW EXHIBITORS USE THE TRADESHOW FLOOR AND

SOCIAL VENUES TO FACILITATE BUSINESS

By

Christina L. Nanton

Bachelor of Art in Sociology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2003

Master of Art in Sociology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2009

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy--Sociology

Department of Sociology
College of Liberal Arts
The Graduate School

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2015

UNLV | GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the dissertation prepared under our supervision by

Christina Nanton

entitled

What Happens in Las Vegas? How Exhibitors Use the Tradeshow Floor and Social Venues to Facilitate Business

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy - Sociology

Department of   Sociology

Robert E. Lang, Ph.D., Committee Chair

Barbara G. Brents, Ph.D., Committee Member

David R. Dickens, Ph.D., Committee Member

Bo Berdhard, Ph.D., Committee Member

Curtis Love, Ph.D., Graduate College Representative

Kathryn Hausbeck Korgan, Ph.D., Interim Dean of the Graduate College

May 2015

Abstract

This study illuminates how place characteristics shape the way in which tradeshow exhibitors "do" business on and off the tradeshow floor. A surge in framing tradeshows as temporary clusters has occurred in the recent decades. Temporary clusters are defined as "hotspots of intensive and dedicated exchange of knowledge, network building and generation of new ideas" (Maskell, Bathelt and Malmberg 2004). The idea that temporarily sharing geographic space can advantage firms is particularly noteworthy in a post-industrial globalized economy. In the literature, social scientists have paid specific attention to the connections between geography and spatial proximity, and information diffusion and knowledge acquisition, interpersonal networks and industry pipelines, and economic activity and outcomes. This research expounds the work of Maskell, Bathelt and Malmberg (2006) and Power and Jannson (2008) who, in the conclusion of their research, hypothesize that social venues may be as important for business exchanges as formal workspaces such as the factory or tradeshow floor.

This study is informed by the interpretive paradigm and based on the tenets of the constructionist approach. This research tradition emphasizes participant's "definition of terms, situations, and events and try to tap the participant's assumptions, implicit meanings, and tacit rules" (Charmaz 2002, p. 681). Constructionists use grounded theory to focus on the *"what"* and *"how"* meanings and actions are constructed. The epistemological goal is an interpretive understanding aimed at discovering social processes within a specific context (Charmaz 2011).

All ethnographic research is restricted to the tradeshow floor. I conducted 18 formal interviews, and dozens of informal interviews with exhibitors at The Cellular Telephone Industries Association—The Wireless Association (CTIA) and the Global Gaming Expo (G2E) in 2013. These are annual international, business-to-business events for mobile and gaming professionals, respectively. I used grounded theory as an inductive approach to data collection. Analysis consisted of uncovering patterns, themes and common categories in the data.

The study has three key findings. First, I found support for exhibitors constructing time as highly valuable, limited and constrained. They organize and plan their time rather than relying on spontaneous, unexpected encounters. Thus time is utilized differently on and off the floor as well as in temporary clusters and permanent clusters. Second, I found that "being noticed" which includes the strategies exhibitors use to drive people to the booth and generate wide-spread attention are just as important, if not more so than the benefits of "being there." The exhibitors strategies for being notice include positioning themselves in desirable locations on the floor, contact clients and colleagues to notify them of their participation before and during the show, and employing in-booth marketing techniques. Being there is receiving unsolicited, spontaneous information while being noticed means dispensing information and generating buzz which can increase industry status and prestige. Third, my findings on relationship development move beyond a structural understanding of social networks. This research provides place-based context of the social processes that occurs on the tradeshow floor and in social venues. A move from the tradeshow floor to social

venues changes the context of interactions. Social venues are viewed as "relaxed" places where "friends" and "acquaintances" spend uninterrupted face-to-face time. A shift from "client" or "lead" to "acquaintance" or "friend" is meaningful. It is in this context that personal information is exchanged, experiences are shared, commonalities are discovered, and the foundation of relationships are laid and solidified.

In business, there are a few things one can always count on: there is always new information to acquire and issues will eventually arise, especially when working with technology. The advantages of possessing relationships that are more meaningful than pure market-based relationships is that business becomes more enjoyable and people want to do business with "good" people they "know and trust", help a "friend" succeed, and give a "friend" the benefit of the doubt when issues arise.

This study advances our understanding of temporary clusters, which are only increasing in prominence, and provides an in-depth account of how place characteristics shape face-to-face interaction and network development.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor and chair, Dr. Robert Lang, for his continued guidance and support, and for providing me with opportunities that extend beyond the department. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Barb Brents, Dr. Bo Bernhard, and especially Dr. David Dickens, for providing thoughtful feedback and encouragement. To my outside committee member, Dr. Curtis Love, I owe you huge thanks for helping me navigate the world of tradeshows. I am grateful to my friends and colleagues in the sociology department, The Lincy Institute, Brookings Mountain West, and at UNLV.

To my husband, Ross, I am continuously amazed by your support. During our first date you asked, what is the return on investment for a Ph.D. in sociology? I don't have the answer to that question yet, but we will find out together. I am indebted to my brother, Jason, for his unwavering support and vote of confidence. You understood, perhaps more than anyone, how long and difficult this journey has been. Thank you for being there for me. To my family, thank you for your cheerleading, and to my nonacademic friends, I am forever grateful for your willingness to celebrate my accomplishments. I do not know if it is me or your love for wine, but I'll take it either way. To my son, Nicholas, you put everything into perspective. I hope I showed you that you can accomplish whatever you put your mind to, even if it seems nearly impossible at the time.

To the men and women that graciously shared their time and insights with me, thank you!

Table of Contents

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In February 2009, newly-elected President of the United States Barack Obama

spoke to a gathering in Elkhart, Indiana. During that speech, he publicly warned

companies receiving government bailout money. "You can't get corporate jets. You can't

go take a trip to Las Vegas or go down to the Super Bowl on the taxpayers' dime. There's

got to be some responsibility and some accountability."

This was not the glitzy media attention Las Vegas had hoped for in a time of deep

recession. In the following days and weeks a flurry of articles in the national and

international press such as *The New York Times*, *Bloomberg Businessweek, The*

Economist and *The Guardian* and *Telegraph,* documented the impact of President

Obama's lambasting. Meanwhile local politicians and business leaders fumed that Las

Vegas had been singled out as *the* city to avoid during a time of fiscal constraint. Several

companies heeded the president's warning for the sake of appearances. Goldman Sachs,

for instance, paid a Las Vegas resort $600,000 in cancellation fees and subsequently

relocated their convention to San Francisco to avoid public scrutiny (USA Today, Feb. 10,

2009; The Guardian, Feb. 10, 2009).

The president's statement and the subsequent attention paid to it are pivotal in

understanding the way in which the rest of the country views Las Vegas and executive

hospitality. Las Vegas is a fun, anything-goes kind of place where people engage in

activities they are not supposed to do at home. It is definitely not viewed as a place

where serious business occurs. Taking a trip or watching a game together does not constitute our cultural understanding of work. Generally speaking, work is not supposed to be fun or occur in leisure settings. But the concept and our understanding of place have become more complex over time. For example, our home and work places blur together, as do our work and leisure places. This change is in direct response to globalization, the advancement of communication, information technologies and transportation, and the transformation of our work culture.

If the president and others viewed Las Vegas through a different lens, a lens that places the city in a framework of advanced capitalism and globalization and recognized its connectivity to rest of the world as a popular destination with international appeal, then it takes on a significant purpose. People *want* to come to Las Vegas, especially for tradeshows and conventions. If we had a better cultural understanding of the relationship between place and interaction and the complexities of doing business, then we might value the intangible benefits of developing relationships which blur the boundaries of colleague and friend and work and leisure.

When companies convene in Las Vegas or any other destination, they are not haphazard or flippant in doing so. The value gained from participating in a tradeshow and convention is established and quantifiable (Phillips, Myhill and McDonough 2007). It is the value of the other stuff—what people do between the hours of 5 pm to 9 am— that is tricky to establish. In fact, measuring the return on investment for executive hospitality such as meeting for drinks, eating together, and partaking in other leisure-based activities is said to be like "nailing jell-o to a tree." That is, the benefits of getting

together informally are exceedingly difficult to assess. Our understanding of informal

business exchanges that occur in leisure environments is anecdotal and intuitive at best

and completely misconstrued at worst.

Yet many people who participate in these meeting intuitively know why they are

important. There is something to be said for seeing the whites of someone's eyes,

shaking their hand or reading their body language. Robert Cailliau, co-inventor of the

World Wide Web, once said, "there's no such thing as a virtual beer: people will still

want to sit together." He was right. Face-to-face meetings are still essential in today's

business climate. The prevalence of conventions and tradeshows and other types of

temporary business clusters are a testament to its importance. Getting together

formally and informally is not merely an economic act; it is part of a larger social process

of 'doing' business that goes beyond contracts and finances to include developing

relationships, discovering commonalities, sharing experiences and establishing trust.

In this research I analyze the relationship between place and interaction as the

stage for interactional processes by asking the following: How do place characteristics

shape the way in which exhibitors "do" business?

RESEARCH DESIGN

This dissertation research is a micro-sociological study of two temporary

business clusters, Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association (CTIA) and Global

Gaming Expo (G2E), that take place in an easily identified but seldom studied global

city—Las Vegas. CTIA and G2E are annual international business-to-business tradeshows

and conventions for those in the mobile and gaming industries, respectively. In this study, I draw from field observations, secondary data, informal conversations, and structured interviews with tradeshow exhibitors to acquire data that is used to answer the research questions above.

Although this is place based research, I do not examine one static geographic space. I contextualize a tradeshow in the same way many of its participants do—a tradeshow is a general term to denote an event that consist of several geographic places: the tradeshow floor (the rented exhibition hall) where the event occurs, the functional (e.g., hotels, airport) and social venues (e.g., restaurants and bars) that are utilized formally and informally during a tradeshow, and the host city where the exhibition hall, functional and social venues are located. I argue that in order to develop an empirical understanding of processes that occur in temporary clusters, researchers need to consider all components of the cluster within it in their research—not just the tradeshow floor. The current research compresses the tradeshow floor and social venues into a single space for interactions. As shown in Figure 1, I seek to untangle the interactional patterns of the places within a temporary cluster—the tradeshow floor and social venues—by analyzing what they have in common, how they differ, and why these distinctions are important to the business-men and –women occupying these spaces temporarily, and what it means for "doing" business.

Figure 1. Preliminary Sensitizing Scheme of Place/Interaction Nexus
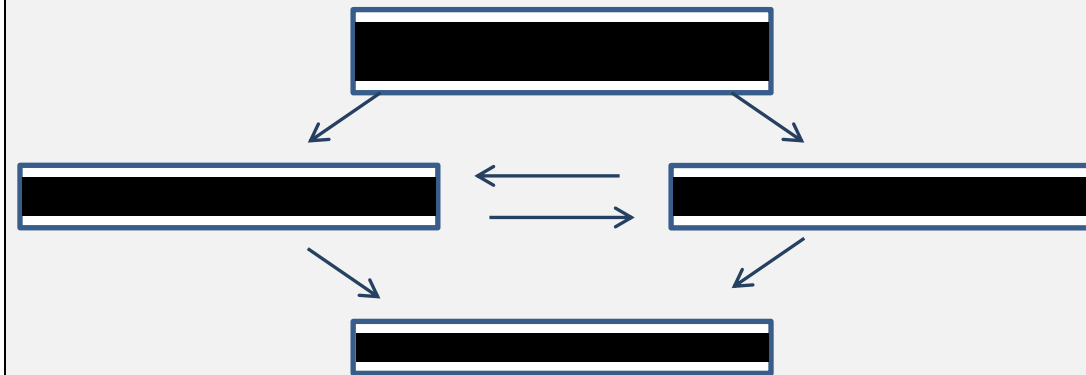
In this study I rely on field observations, secondary data, informal conversations with dozens of exhibitors and attendees, and eighteen structured interviews with exhibitors. The informal conversations often lasted from five to fifteen minutes. The structured interviews I conducted were, on average, one hour and thirty minutes. The people I spoke with represent business-to-business technology-based firms selling software and products. These firms had various degrees of industry prestige and business scope, time in industry, years exhibiting, and possess different levels of financial and human resources. I interviewed exhibitors that occupied different organizational roles including salespeople, technicians, researchers and developers, marketing and public relations professionals. All ethnographic research is restricted to the tradeshow floor. However, the data on social venues comes from interviews with exhibitors who were asked to share their insights and experiences about their experiences in social venues. Though the findings of this study are in no way representative of or generalizable to all exhibitors or tradeshows, the approach I employ

produces an in-depth analysis that deepens our understanding of the relationships

between interactions and place at two temporary business-to-business events.

SOCIETAL SHIFTS AND THE IMPLICATION TO BUSINESS

The shift from pre-Industrial to Industrial to post-Industrial society significantly

changed the nature of our relationships, particularly in business. Bell (2001, p. 95)

defines globalization as "the sum of a series of processes that have forged a sense of

increasing connectedness between people and places dispersed around the world."

Societies that were once held together by independence and self-sufficiency are now

held together through rational-will (Tonnies 1963), mutual interdependencies

(Durkheim 1997) and a web of economics, finances, and power (Wallerstein 2004).

Technological advancements aid in the way people experience their world. In

1500-1840, horse-drawn coaches and sailing ships moved at speeds of 10 mph.

Although one could travel long distances, it took several days or even months to do so

and was costly and dangerous. As a result, most people did not move far from their

birthplace. The 1850s to 1930s brought forth the steam locomotives and gas-driven

automobiles but the common person could not afford such luxuries. With the 1950s,

propeller aircraft reached speeds of 300 to 400 mph. Ten years later jet passenger

aircraft exceeded speed of 500 mph (Harvey 1989; Gergen 1991). As our modes of

transportation become more sophisticated, accessible and affordable, our experience of

the world continues to shrink, resulting in what Harvey (1989) identified as the time-

space compression. It is easier than ever to move people and goods.

The fluidity of the post-Industrial Western world has caused many urban

theorists to question aloud if place matters anymore. After all, people can erase the

effects of distance with relatively little effort. Their arguments contend that new

information technologies and the ease and affordability of transportation would

deemphasize space. Many theorists posited that people would move from large cities in

favor of working remotely and living less compactly. But people have not left cities.

Scholars estimate that over half of the world's population lives in cities (Brenner and

Keil 2006). Over 200 cities worldwide have a population exceeding two million. The

largest metropolises include Tokyo with a population of 36.6 million, Delhi with a

population of 22.6 million and Seoul with a population of 22.5 million (Demographia

World Urban Areas: 7th Ed., April 2011). In the United States, megapolitans or strings of

metropolitan areas connected by share transportation networks, labor markets and

culture are projected to house of two-thirds population by 2040 (Nelson and Lang

2011).

Central to urban conglomerations are industrial clusters. Clusters are defined as

"a group of firms, and related economic actors and institutions that are located near

one another and that draw productive advantage from their mutual proximity and

connections" (Cotright 2006, p. iv). Industrial clusters are the lifeblood of metropolitans'

regional success, and supporting them is a key economic development strategy for

many policymakers and practitioners throughout the United States. The benefits of

industrial clustering are numerous: labor market pooling, supplier specialization,

knowledge spillover, entrepreneurship and supportive culture and institutional framework (Cotright 2006).

In the past decade, scholars have wondered whether the benefits of industrial clustering can be replicated for a brief period of time. A focus on firms' use of tradeshows as spaces to identify and secure partners and exchange knowledge has emerged as a new area of study in globalization. There are currently a handful of theoretical and empirical articles written by economic geographers and other social scientists. Yet, sociological research remains absent in this area of study. In my review of the social science literature on tradeshows and temporary clusters, the empirical focus is on describing the functional characteristics and spatial patterns associated with firms' participation in tradeshows. However, an exploration into *how* these patterns emerge in specific places is largely absent.

Postmodern theorists such as Baudrillard characterize urban spaces like Las Vegas and Orlando as a simulacrum and pastiche of other places. Las Vegas and Orlando are popular tourist destinations specializing in adult freedom and family fun, respectively. People flock to Las Vegas to visit a replica of the New York skyline, Eiffel Tower or a large Egyptian pyramid. In Orlando, families gather to see animated, fictional characters dressed in costume and ride in simulators. The public has a large appetite for these places. At any given time and with relative ease, Las Vegas and Orlando can each accommodate an influx of several hundred thousand people due to the public and private infrastructure (roads and air travel) and amenities (hotels and restaurants). As a

result, these cities are largely reliant upon the service sector more so than any other

sector for economic stability.

POINTS OF EXCHANGE

Tourism and tradeshows and conventions often go hand in hand. Cities like Las

Vegas and Orlando target temporary gatherings so amenities are used and facilities are

full during off peak tourism times (e.g., Thursday thru Sunday). A tradeshow is a

professional event created by formal organization(s) and supported by an aggregate of

people who share business interests. A trade association often possesses nonprofit

status. Its function is to advocate on the behalf of its membership and support collective

industry initiatives at all levels of government (Rogers, 2008). Trade associations host

tradeshow events, which are often held in conjunction with a trade convention. These

events are a formal occasion to condense an international industry into a single space

for the purpose of attaining individual and collective business interests (Maskell, Bathelt

and Malmberg 2004).

In an academic sense, tradeshows and conventions, also referred to as

temporary clusters or gathering events, are "hotspots of intensive and dedicated

exchange of knowledge, network building and generation of new ideas" (Maskell, *et al.*

2004, p. 2). They replicate more traditional clusters in their advantages. The tradeshow

floor is commonly recognized as a place for exhibitors to accomplish many tasks

including gaining widespread exposure in industry, viewing the latest trends, and

assessing the competition. In their booths, exhibitors concentrate on showcasing new

merchandise, meeting new contacts, educating attendees on products/services, collecting business cards, establishing leads, solving problems, reinforcing and developing relationships, setting up follow-up meetings, and selling products/services.

Urban researchers in different areas of social science have conducted numerous studies in order to understand and situate the relationship between business and cities in a framework of globalization. Such studies include the competitive or hierarchical nature of cities and countries (Friedmann 1986), the connectivity, cooperation and networks of cities and countries (Beaverstock, Smith and Taylor 2000; Taylor and Lang 2005), specialization and production of cities and countries (Sassen 2001), comparative case studies of cities' environments (Zukin 1995), metrics and indices of cities and countries (Cohen 1981), among dozens of other areas of study. While the literature is ripe with macro-sociological studies evaluating globalization, the rise of information technology and the relationship between the national and local, Sassen (2000) argues there is need for micro-sociological research of the global city using classic Chicago School methods, that is, rich in-depth ethnography and social psychology to focus on the social processes within these cities.

I examine how individuals and groups imbue place with meaning, a concept broadly called place attachment. There is no shortage of research in this area, which Patterson and Williams (2005) have broadly classified into two categories, psychometrics and phenomenology, based on paradigmatic ontology, epistemology and axiology. The psychometrics approach views the discovery of scientific truth is achievable through the quantitative operationalization of variables. Phenomenologists

do not believe there is an objective truth that can be attained through research, but focus instead on subjective meaning and understanding. One ontological framework is not better or worse than the other; they simply yield different scientific insights. I situate my research in the latter.

I use Gieryn's (2000) definition of place, which is made up of the following components: geographic location, material form, and meaning. However, the places in my study are not permanently attached to a specific geography or material form; rather they borrow geography and material form, temporarily, in annual intervals. Tradeshows are temporarily constructed (typically for a week) and then deconstructed until the next installment (generally the following year). The temporary existence and use of place does not make it less significant to the people who use it; indeed, I argue it makes the social processes that occur much more important.

Further, in my examination of place I am not examining only one place. When I contextualize a tradeshow I do so in the same way many of its participants do—a tradeshow is a general term to denote an event. Thus a tradeshow consist of several places: the tradeshow floor (the rented exhibition hall) where the event occurs, the functional (e.g., hotels, airport) and social (e.g. restaurants and bars) venues that are utilized formally and informally during a tradeshow, and the host city where the exhibition hall, functional and social venues are located. Collectively, these places create a temporary cluster. I argue that in order to develop an empirical understanding of temporary clusters researchers must consider all the places within them. While the ethnographic part of this research is restricted to the tradeshow floor, my interviews

with exhibitors provided insight on the significance of the tradeshow floor and social venues.

Social science research on tradeshows evaluates the tradeshow floor to the exclusion of the complementary functional and social venues tradeshow participants utilize. As a result, we have a growing understanding of only one part of the temporary cluster. Many researchers acknowledge this limitation in their research. In fact, some have posited that social venues in particular may be as important as the tradeshow floor. In the conventions and meetings literature, researchers examine these places more holistically (although they do not frame it in the context of a temporary cluster). However, they evaluate the functional and social venues utilized by tradeshow participants and compare one host city to another. They do not, however, analyze the meaning of the different places.

I discuss the characteristics of the tradeshow floor including the physical layout, temporal flow and atmosphere then juxtapose them with the characteristics social venues. These place-based characteristics shape exhibitors' interactional potential, or the range of interactions actors perceive as feasible within the site (Milligan 1998). The physical layout, temporal flow and atmosphere of the site in no way determine the interactions that will occur. Instead these attributes shape the exhibitors' perception of the setting and their interactional potential—potential for visibility and being noticed, managing time and prioritizing objectives, and characterizing relationships and patterns of behavior— which, in return, structures the interaction patterns on the floor and in social venues.

Figure 2 Main Analytical Themes

Site Characteristics (Themes)	Interactional Potential (Subthemes)
Temporal Flow	Use of time, Prioritizing Objectives, Focused Interaction
Physical Layout	Strategies of Being Noticed
Atmosphere	The Process of Doing Business in Social Venues

The absence of empirical knowledge on the relationship between the place and interaction, particularly executive hospitality, has real world consequences that affect firms, industries, cities and workers. As the response to President Obama's comment highlighted, a significant decline in hospitality business spending is felt not only by a business or industry, but also by the throngs of people and cities that rely on the revenue from these events. As the president publicly chided firms for spending money on travel and entertainment in the name of business, firms have reevaluated the role of executive hospitality. Some have scaled back their budgets for gathering events and business travel. This occurs at a time when business is more specialized and competitive than ever, and success is dependent on the connectivity to others, be it experts, customers, suppliers, manufactures or the cadre of others that assist in generating ideas and bringing a product or a service to the marketplace.

The issues discussed in this research have broad implications and are too important to rely on intuition, anecdotes and misconceptions. A study of interactions in temporary clusters is relevant because A.) It has received very little empirical attention to date and there is no sign of temporary events dying out and B.) Previous research points to the potential importance of social venues to exhibitors that are, in many cases, seen to be more significant than the stated purpose of the cluster—meeting on the

13

tradeshow floor. This may point to a shift in the way we "do" business, and what "doing" business looks like.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

'The Tradeshow' is a general term is used by academics, meeting organizers, exhibitors and attendees to refer to a temporary cluster that is comprised of (1.) clearly defined workplaces such as the tradeshow floor or convention halls and (2.) the places within a city that are unrelated and exist separately from tradeshow yet are deeply intertwined with the event. This includes functional spaces such as hotels and airports that are used out of necessity and given great consideration in deciding where to host a large event. I will not discuss these places, as they are already emphasized in convention and meetings literature. It also includes entertainment or social venues that are used as part necessity (you have to eat) and as an extension of the workplace. Social venues such as restaurants, bars, nightclubs, coffee shops, entertainment sites and golf courses are used by tradeshow exhibitors as leisure environments, formal workplaces, and a mixture of both. The exhibitors viewed social venues as an aggregate or collection of places that serve as spaces to meet before and after tradeshow floor hours. I use the term tradeshow to signify the event, the tradeshow floor or floor to refer to the exhibition hall in which exhibitor booths reside, and social venues to reference entertainment and leisure places.

With regards to whom I am referring, I use the phrase "the exhibitors" as shorthand to denote lengthy phrases such as "the exhibitors I spoke with" or "the

exhibitors that participated in this research" that often read as onerous. The exhibitors

in this research include the men and women that participated in this research both

formally and informally. The phrase is not meant to be representative of the 1,100

exhibitors at CTIA or 450 exhibitors at G2E or to anyone who has ever been an exhibitor.

"The attendees" is used to indicate those who walk the floor of a tradeshow at CTIA and

G2E. Although I did not formally interview tradeshow attendees, I did speak with many

of them. Some of their insights appear in this research directly and indirectly. To provide

context as to who attendees are in a professional sense: At CTIA, the breakdown of

attendees is 25% C-level ("chief" positions such as Chief Executive Office and Chief

Operating Officer), 34% executive and senior management, 27% manager or account

executive, 12% specialist or technical, and 2% other

(http://daily.ctia.org/files/CTIAShows/SuperMobilityWeek_Prospectus_2014_Final.pdf).

CHAPTER OUTLINE

In Chapter 2, I begin by briefly summarizing the existing social science literature

on permanent clusters and then provide an overview of the existing research on

temporary clusters. I outline the function of tradeshows, the advantages of attending,

and the process of developing business networks, including a brief discussion on face-to-

face interactions and trust. In the latter half of the chapter, I detail the main theoretical

perspectives of urban sociology, emphasizing the symbolic interactionist perspective.

Finally, I discuss symbolic interaction research in the areas of space and place,

construction and meaning of place, and gathering interactions. I conclude with a brief

synopsis on the literature and theories discussed.

In Chapter 3, I begin by outlining the qualitative methodologies I used in the

study. Next I describe the tenets of the social constructionist perspective which I used as

the analytical frame for this study. Social constructionists investigate the ways in which

individuals and groups participate in the construction of a social phenomenon or object.

Researchers using this epistemological lens are particularly interested in '*what* people

construct and *how* this social construction process unfolds.' (Charmaz 2007, p. 397;

emphasis in original). Through the use of constructionist grounded theory, I recount

exhibitors' interactions in the particularities of time, space, and situation (Charmaz

2011). Finally, I conclude with a discussion on Las Vegas as field for data collection from

perspectives of convention and meeting literature and popular culture.

Results are presented and discussed in-depth in chapters four through six. In

chapter four, I illustrate how time shapes the constructed meaning of the tradeshow

event, and then examine exhibitors' use of time as either structured/planned or

spontaneous/unplanned, on and off the floor. In chapter five, I introduce the concept of

"being noticed" or participating in and securing the advantages of the opportunity the

show provides by getting people to the booth and generating wide-spread attention. I

detail the strategies exhibitors use to stand out on the floor, and then I examine the

conceptual differences between "being there" and "being noticed." In chapter six, I

briefly juxtapose the floor with social venues, and then I investigate how firms use social

venues as spaces to advance their business interests. Interpretations,

recommendations, limitations and conclusion are presented in chapter seven.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL REVIEW

Why are firms drawn to a common region? This question was first addressed in

Alfred Marshall's *The Principles of Economics* (1920) where he attributed aggregation to

a common region with several distinct advantages of a localized economy. First, certain

regions possess natural endowments such as climate, soil or access to land or water that

provide an advantage over other locales. Firms are attracted to these regions because

they can use and benefit from the endowment. Second, a localized economy provides a

mutually beneficial opportunity to both firms and workers. Workers with specific skills

congregate to a region because employment is plentiful and their skills valued. Firms

locate in the region because workers and complementary services are abundant.

Another advantage of a localized economy is the division of labor. In Marshall's time,

division of labor was the manual labor of factory workers. Today's division of labor is a

knowledge economy based on flexible specialization. Firms are able to operate more

efficiently and effectively when tasks are divided according to firms' specialized skill

sets. Last, regions with localized capabilities possess what Alfred refers to as an

'industrial atmosphere', in which "the mysteries of the trade become no mystery"

(Marshall 1920: p. IV.X.7) and firms located in close geographic proximity benefit from

something 'in the air'. Marshall's work has a stronghold in current economic

development strategies. Industrial clusters are viewed as the economic engines of the

US metropolitans. Policy makers seek to build on regional strengths by adding complementary industries and institutional support.

The Elusive Quality of a Cluster

The elusive quality of cluster is the synergy that develops from a region's milieu of actors who interact, inspire and collaborate with one another to advance their business interest. The essence of Marshall's 'industrial atmosphere' has been extended in recent social science literature. Concepts such as 'buzz' (Stroper and Venables 2002), 'local broadcasting' (Owen-Smith and Power 2002) and 'noise' (Grabher 2002) capture and describe the elusive quality of a vibrant cluster. Clusters possess a communication ecology that includes a network of actors that collaborate by sharing news, information, experience, rumors, recommendations and speculation (Schuldt and Bathelt 2011). The success of Silicon Valley's technology cluster (Saxenian 1994), Hollywood's entertainment cluster (Scott 2002), and New York City's art and fashion cluster (Currid 2007) is attributed, in part, to buzz.

Regional Advantage (Saxenian 1994) documents the rise and success of Silicon Valley compared to Boston's Route 128. The divergence between the two regions is traced, in part, to the organization of production. While Route 128 held true to the traditional large-scale vertical organization that values the 'organization man' (worker dedicated to the firm), Silicon Valley embraces horizontal organization of small specialized firms that value technical culture and progress over firm allegiance. The technical culture of the region is supported by associations and organizations that use

19

similar language and materials, as well as actors who share educational and entrepreneurial backgrounds. The region's focus on advancing technology creates a community that encourages open communication and informal socializing.

Of course there is also the infamous story of Homebrew Computer Club whose members (founded dozens of companies including Apple and Microsoft) often convened at the Oasis Bar and Grill near Menlo Park. In Silicon Valley, a story of this sort is the norm, not the exception. Tom Wolfe explains the social environment to Saxenian: "Every year there was some place… [where members] would head after work to have a drink and gossip and brag and trade war stories about phase jitters, phantom circuits, bubble memories, pulse trains, bounceless contacts, burst models, leapfrog tests, p-n junctions, sleeping sickness modes, slow-death episodes, RAMs, NAKs, MOSes, PCMs, PROMs, PROM blowers, PROM blasters, and teramagnitudes, meaning multiples of a million millions" (Saxenian1994, p. 33).

A cooperative environment coupled with close geographic proximity allows for formal and informal exchange between actors with similar language, interests and attitudes. Furthermore, the atmosphere of Silicon Valley encourages openness among acquaintances. As one executive told Saxenian, "I have people call me quite frequently and say, 'Hey, did you ever run into this one?' and you say, 'Yeah, seven or eight years ago. Why don't you try this, that or the other thing?'" (Saxenian 1994, p. 33).

The Warhol Economy (Currid 2007) documents the importance of New York City's social scene in the art and fashion (culture) sector. Participation in after work hours activities is commonly dismissed as frivolous and insignificant, yet Currid found

that these activities create an opportunity structure for those in the culture industries to meet tastemakers, idea producers, peer reviewers and gatekeepers and to gain credibility. Social venues served as the places were ideas and information are disseminated and discussed, where collaborations come together. Thus social venues are not just places to drink, do drugs and dance; they serve an economic function beyond the obvious consumption-based economy. Nightclubs, bars, galleries, restaurants and other social venues act as 'cultural nodes of exchange' and are the 'junction where the social produces the economics' (p. 108). These places are not only fun but they are informally used to advance careers and the cultural economy.

The informal exchange that occurs in social venues keeps actors informed on the latest aspect of business and inspires new ideas. The value of these exchanges lay in the time it takes to share and retrieve information that is then used to expound upon existing knowledge or create new knowledge. Route 128's traditional organizational structure creates an environment wary of sharing information for fear of increased competition among firms. Conventional methods such as industry journals or tradeshows require actors to wait until the content is written and released before access to the information is accessible to the public. Conversely, actors in Silicon Valley and New York City receive access to critical information and new ideas and opportunities just by "being there" (Gertler 1995).

Research on Temporary Clusters

Can the benefits of permanent aggregation be replicated for a short period of time? The ease of mobility allows firms to come together in a select place for a specific period of time for the sole purpose of enhancing their profession milieu (Torre 2008). Temporary clusters (Maskell *et al.* 2004, 2006; Bathelt and Schuldt 2008; Rinallo and Golfetto 2011) and cyclical clusters (Power and Jansson 2008) are terms used to study the phenomenon of temporary business gatherings. Temporary clusters are defined as "hotspots of intensive and dedicated exchange of knowledge, network building and generation of new ideas" (Maskell *et al.* 2004, p. 3). They mirror permanent clusters yet their form is "temporary, periodic and intensified" in nature (Maskell *et al.* 2004, p. 3). The concept of cyclical clusters is similar to temporary clusters, although the reoccurring nature of temporary business gatherings is emphasized. As Power and Jansson (2008, p. 427) note, "…firms can fully access and benefit from the functional spaces that tradeshows offer only if they continuously, over time and multiple events, engage in the trade-fair cycle." The cyclical nature of tradeshows is vital because building trust and maintaining networks is an enduring process. For simplicity sake I refer to tradeshows as temporary clusters while fully recognizing and acknowledging the significance of cyclical nature of these events.

Bathelt *et al.* (2004), Maskell *et al.* (2004, 2006) and Torre (2008) make the case that tradeshows are temporary clusters. A cluster is the widely used term to denote the spatial agglomeration of firms and institutions that coalesce through the cooperation, competition and innovation of its actors (Porter 1998). Similar to permanent clusters, tradeshows facilitate face-to-face interaction which is viewed as the ideal form of

business communication (Stroper and Venables 2002). However, face-to-face

interactions during a tradeshow are concentrated between actors from different regions

and nations rather than actors who share geographic proximity. This allows firms to

strengthen weak ties (Granovetter 1973), fill structural holes (Burt 1992), and attain

information from different knowledge pools. Further, knowledge is exchanged at an

exceptionally high rate as participants leave the distractions of their everyday routines

behind to interact with others in their professional milieu, showcase themselves and

their products, and build their reputation. These interactions assist in the formation of

business networks and the establishment of business contacts. Tradeshows also allow

firms to acquire information on regional, national or global competitors through

personal observation, brief conversations and third-party information which provides a

broader perspective of the industry. In short, tradeshows compress an entire industry

into a single space for a brief period of time, whereas permanent clusters contain only a

portion of an industry's activities.

The Advantages of a Network

Firms do not become wildly profitable or successful by existing solely in a

microcosm; to successes globally they must be part of a broader framework (Wolfe and

Gertler 2004). Pipelines are partnerships of actors located in different regions or

countries that rely on one another to share their regional knowledge (Owen-Smith and

Powell 2004). Unlike buzz environments where "… trust exists in local milieus as

something inherited, that any 'insider' will benefit from by default" (Bathelt, Malmberg

and Maskell 2004, p. 39), pipelines are nonlocal communication linkages requiring the effort of a firm and its actors. Participation in a pipeline is complex and costly, yet firms participate because the information they accessed from others in their pipeline is essential to their overall success.

Pipelines have specified boundaries that are established not by geographic proximity but by degree of trust and contractual obligations. Bathelt *et al.* (2004) do not define trust; however, others have frequently cited it as "the willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations about another's intentions or behaviors" (McEvily, Perrone and Zaheer 2003, p. 92). Bathelt *et al.* (2004, p. 40) notes,

> Once a potential partner from the outside has been found, it has to be decided how much information should be given to that partner and to which degree the activities of that firm have to be monitored or controlled. The resulting interaction is thus greatly impacted by the degree of trust that exists between the firms.

While buzz environments allow actors to access unfiltered, "undirected, spontaneous" (Bathelt *et al.* 2004, p. 40) knowledge at no cost, actors with pipelines obtain filtered, "decisive, non-incremental" (Bathelt *et al.* 2004, p. 40) knowledge from sources outside their spatial clusters. The content shared among partners is targeted towards certain goals.

Several quantitative studies have documented the benefits of business partnerships. Owen-Smith and Powell's (2004) study of Boston's biotechnology sector shows that firms' participation in the biotechnology cluster alone did not result in non-incremental or innovative knowledge acquisition. This knowledge was acquired through interregional or transnational partnerships. Pipelines allow firms to obtain information

about outside markets and knowledge outputs as well as information about new or emerging markets, which ultimately support their innovation process. In the Barletta footwear district in the South of Italy, firms with non-local relationships were more innovative and possess higher absorptive capacity than firms without non-local knowledge networks (Boschma and ter Wal 2007). Similarly, in Schilling and Phelps' (2007) study of 1,106 firms in eleven industries, firms with expansive networks had greater patent production.

Qualitative studies such as Saxenian (1994) and Currid (1997) reveals that access to others in the industry through spatial proximity is professionally beneficial to both individuals and firms. Other research such as that of Power and Jansson reveals that actors "…were adamant that having a good social network—and/or good standing within wide industrial networks—is important for long-term profitability and sustainability" (2008, p. 432). Often industrial networks extend beyond local geographic boundaries. Both quantitative and qualitative research reveals the importance of business networks.

The Function of Tradeshows

A tradeshow is defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary as "temporary markets organized to promote trade, where buyers and sellers gather to transact business. Trade fairs [as they are more commonly called in Europe and Asia] are organized at regular intervals, generally at the same location and time of year." Tradeshows are, at their core, sales events.

Power and Jansson's (2008) sought to understand the 'overlapping spaces' of the tradeshow floor. First, a tradeshow serves as a forum to enhance symbolic capital. Symbolic capital or cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) is the elusive knowledge or differences that signify power and status in a system of exchange. Power and Jansson (2008) emphasize the importance of symbolic capital to firms at the furniture and interior design tradeshows in Milan. Furniture is a standardized product. To an undiscerning eye one couch may not differ much from another. Yet the brand of a couch and the reputation of its maker do. Brand and reputation serve to create a distinction among products in a marketplace. Some brands are cited for their value, while others possess a specific quality, aesthetic, or design. This distinction adds both tangible and intangible value to a product or brand. Tangible value is realized in the cost of the product and our ability to access it. Intangible value is seen in our perception of the product, its maker, and their reputation. For example, buyers will pay more for a brand that is considered good quality or highly desirable in terms of status.

Symbolic capital from "being there" is perhaps the most significant advantage of attending a tradeshow (Bathelt and Schuldt 2008). Attendance is expected of "serious" firms (Power and Jansson 2008). Firms use this space to advertise themselves and their products to a large audience. Tradeshows attract thousands from around the world. Exhibitors can readily provide attendees with dense information regarding brand, products and services and are able to evaluate their position in the marketplace and compare and distinguish themselves from competitors. In addition, exhibitors with a strong showing may receive free advertising in promotional materials and trade

magazines (Power and Jansson 2008). This recognition conveys to others the firm and its products stood out from its peers, which boost their reputation. A firm's reputation is significant because it communicates the character of a firm or its products without any interpersonal interaction taking place. A firm's reputation can convey a promise to consumers, which, in turn, reduces vulnerability in the marketplace. Reputation, which expectations are based, can act as the artificial creation of trust (Blois 1999). Consumers use a firm's reputation as an indicator of what to expect from a firm or its product which reduces uncertainty in a large, often informal marketplace.

The second use of the space is to discuss and negotiate sales and contracts. The literature is divided on this point, as it seems that industry type has a large impact on whether sales are generated on the tradeshow floor. Rinallo and Golfetto (2011) and Power and Jansson (2008) provide evidence a tradeshow is a marketplace that is complete with exhibitor and buyer deal making. Yet other studies document a decrease in the importance of sales at tradeshows (Borghini *et al.*2006, Bathelt and Schuldt 2008). Thus the emphasis of sales and contracts at tradeshows is largely dependent on industry type. However, actual deal making aside, tradeshows provides participants with an opportunity to check in with existing customers and to meet with potential customers face-to-face, both of which are vital to working towards and maintaining sales. In fact some participants schedule in-person meetings with potential and existing customers to discuss business.

Third, a tradeshow is used as a space to diffuse knowledge on industry trends and innovations. Bathelt *et al.* (2004) posit that tradeshows create a fertile

27

environment for knowledge exchange and creation because participants' possess a

certain level of understanding of the industry and are able to pool their knowledge. The

knowledge exchanged at consumer goods tradeshows include information on current

market trends in colors, shapes and materials, as well as new designs and accessories

(Bathelt and Schuldt 2011; Power and Jansson 2008). On the other hand, the knowledge

exchanged at investment goods tradeshows includes information on the development

of new producers, users, and markets. This information is then used to make strategic

decisions or adjustments. Moreover, participations commonly discuss technical issues,

product alterations and innovations with potential customers (Bathelt and Schuldt

2011).[1]

Finally, tradeshows are an ideal space to develop and foster networks because

participation is low risk and involve no additional travel costs (Bathelt and Schudlt

2008). Firms often use tradeshows to identify and select partners from other regions or

nations and to initiate initial discussions as well as reaffirm existing relationships

(Bathelt and Schudlt 2008). Participants interviewed by Power and Jansson (2008) and

Bathelt and Schuldt (2008) employ strategies such as scanning name badges or

exhibition passes, walking the tradeshow floor, and stationing individuals in high traffic

areas to "bump into" particular people and make contact with representatives from

---

[1] It is important to note, as Rinallo and Golfetto (2011) did, that tradeshow organizers play an active role in the release and protection of information. Organizers showcase new innovations through the dissemination of marketing materials as well as highlight trendsetting firms by locating them near main corridors, entrances or other highly visible locations (Jansson and Power 2008). The participation of a high status firm adds legitimacy to the tradeshow. Conversely, tradeshow organizers hinder the diffusion of knowledge by restricting certain people (such as non-buyers), the use of photography or by implementing other intellectual property protection measures (Rinallo and Golfetto 2011). Other research indicates that firms may be reluctant to exchange specific information due to competitive conditions (Bathelt and Schuldt 2008) or the sensitive nature of intellectual property (Power and Jansson 2008).

other firms. Power and Jansson (2008) note that participants frequently indicated that they followed up with new contacts after arriving home in an effort to strengthen rapport, while Schudlt and Bathelt (2011, p. 16) found that participants "only occasionally" follow up with contacts immediately.

Though systematic studies have not been done, previous research does lend indirect insight into how initial contact may evolve into collaborative relationships and networks.

· Bathelt and Schuldt (2008, p. 863): firms scan other exhibits to identify partners. "Firms are able to find suitable partners to complement their needs, establish trust with distant partners and undertake first steps in the development of durable interfirm pipelines…" "One owner of a company at L+B mentioned that 'occasionally new cooperations are established during tradeshows. In principle, however, you stay in loose contact for a while, sometimes over years. And then, when a particular project is undertaken, you get back to that firm'." "Latent networks can be activated and used when needed."

· Power and Jansson (2008, p. 432-434): actors meet through their participation in a tradeshow, interviewees stressed that relationships need to be "built over time and nurtured through repeat contact." Interviewees note "after some years and regular encounters with the same people and firms, they were either accepted into existing groups or slowly formed their own groups and networks." "Trust-based rapport" and maintaining "firm reputation" requires regular, successive meetings. "…interviewees stated that they consciously planned individual

meetings and networking events in advance, commonly prepared special

materials tailored to each type of contact, and carefully organized the meetings

and venues themselves… Particular staff were assigned to people they already

knew, and an emphasis was placed on getting to know people on a more

personal level. On returning home, all the interviews said, considerable time was

spent following up on even seemingly irrelevant contacts and meetings. Finally,

the shows themselves often functioned as a booking area: firms and buyers

made arrangements at one tradeshow for a further or fuller meeting at the next

show they were both scheduled to attend."

· Schuldt and Bathelt (2011, p. 17-18): actors are brought together through

mutual interest (e.g. skill-sets, education, advancing particular technology),

"focused communities seemingly develop and are continuously extended

through repeated interaction". Focused communities "supported

communication and enable firms to interpret information." Communities

become more defined over time. "Through joint experiences during various

tradeshows and repeated discussions about the same topics, institutional

arrangement developed further in incremental ways contributing to the

collective evolution of these communities." Face-to-face interaction "helps to

select partners with whom he shared thinking patterns, feelings, evaluations

schemes and the like." Over time latent networks "seemed" to develop.

Thus we can gather from the literature that developing networks is a process that

occurs over time; requires repetitive face-to-face contact; involves trust which is either

formed as a byproduct of temporary cluster as Bathelt and Schuldt (2011, p. 1965)

indicate: "This trust appears to enter a tradeshow and stimulate communication

patterns which are more open than in an everyday situation." Or it is created in other

ways as Power and Jansson (2008) suspect, trust requires face-to-face interactions and

repeat meetings and is centered on focused communities.

The articles above does not detail the social processes used to actively develop

trust between firms, determine if a firm is trustworthy, or lend any insight into how

firms demonstrate their trustworthiness to others. Yet the very essence of a network is

its specified boundaries that are established not by geographic proximity but by degree

of trust and contractual obligations. Moreover, there was little to no attention to the

actors' meaning of trust or the different strategies they employ to develop trust. At an

empirical level, we know producers of standardized consumer goods did not believe

that pre-existing networks were crucial to their business and small firms may have

trouble establishing trust and becoming part of network, as they may be viewed as not

being in long enough in business to be part of and participate actively in networks

(Bathelt and Schuldt 2008). The authors believe this was due to small firms lacking the

experience and knowledge of communication practices.

The Social Process of Developing Trust at Tradeshows

The literature on the social environment of tradeshows is scant and its value to

temporary clusters remains elusive. The social environment includes activities that take

place outside the tradeshow floor such as cafes, bars, restaurants, parties,

entertainment venues and other places of leisure. A systematic study focusing on the

social aspects of tradeshows or temporary clusters has not been done. However,

previous research suggests that: A.) Networking, perhaps more so than any other

business function, occurs outside the tradeshow floor. Power and Jansson note, "One

sign of importance that the participants attach to maintaining (and impressing) network

contacts is the attention paid to organizing off-site events, such as dinners and parties,

for contacts" (2008, p. 433). B.) Participation in the social environment is considered

part of work. Bathelt and Schuldt (2008) found that nearly 70% of the 142 participants

interviewed meeting customers for dinner and other social events, while Power and

Jansson (2008) report staff was expected to attend parties and events as part of their

work. Fortunately, "there was a consensus that socializing at tradeshows is one of the

high points of their work" (Power and Jansson 2008, p. 433). C.) The social environment

is significant. Maskell *et al.* (2006) hypothesize that "corridors, cafes, bars and similar

meeting points *may sometimes be* the most important places for information exchange

in temporary clusters" (p. 1002, emphasis added). Power and Jansson mention, "… the

dance floor *might be* as important for some business networks as the factory floor"

(2008, p. 433, emphasis added).

But what exactly goes on afterhours? There are six possible motivations for

meeting social venues that I gleaned from the literature. Most statements were said in

passing rather than as detailed explanations coupled with empirical examples:

1. The social realm is a place to exchange information in an informal setting. Interactions are informal, yet business related (Maskell *et al.* 2006, Bathelt and Schuldt 2008).

2. The social realm is a place to say 'thank you for doing business with us!' Interactions are geared towards showing customers a good time through leisure activities (Bathelt and Schuldt 2008). Conducting business in not the primary focus of this outing.

3. The social realm is a place to deepen relationships and establish trust. "Particular staff were assigned to people they already knew, and an emphasis was placed on getting to know people on a more personal level" (Power and Jansson 2008). Interactions are directed towards interpersonal relationship building.

4. The social realm allows firms a space to throw parties to attract certain people to network with (Power and Jansson 2008). There are so many firms vying for attention on tradeshow floor, firms create a more intimate space to network.

5. The social realm is a space for large firms with multiple office locations to get employees together to exchange ideas and experiences and foster cohesion in a less formal environment (Bathelt and Schuldt 2008).

6. The social realm is an extension of the tradeshow. A large number of firms cannot afford to, or are not allowed to, exhibit at the tradeshow. The social realm (e.g., renting space to host party) is used as a place to showcase firm's products or boost reputation (Power and Jansson 2008).

Why is participation in the social environment important? Bathelt and Schuldt (2008: p. 860) note: "The multiplex nature of these meetings [meetings that occur outside the tradeshow] enables firms to develop expectations about the way their partners conduct business. In the end, this reduces the risks of future transactions." We can infer from this and similar statements that *something* occurs in the social environment that does not occur or occurs less frequently than on the tradeshow floor.

Defining Trust

Erving Goffman defines face-to-face interaction as "the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's actions when in one another's immediate physical presence" (1959, p. 15). Trust is "the willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations about another's intentions or behaviors" (McEvily, Perrone and Zaheer 2003, p. 92). In this regard, trust is relational between the trustor and trustee. The research cited below views trust in an organizational context geared towards goal attainment.

Trust is built in a 'conscious' and 'systematic' way (Bathelt *et al.* 2004). According to Blois (1999) and McEvily *et al.* (2003), inherent in the concept of trust is a positive assumption about another person's motives and intentions. In a trusting relationship, person A will act in person B's interest when possible, which, in return, reduces his vulnerability. (Although we do not expect one to put their self-interest above ours.) If person A acts in person's B interest, that action increases person B's perception of person A's trustworthiness (the reserve relationship is also possible).

The act of trusting is another person is an evolutionary process that cannot be created in the short-term, unless it is based on irrationality. According to Blois (1999), demonstrating trustworthiness (being worthy of trust) aids in the development of trust. Firms, through the actors that represent them, can exhibit trustworthiness in two ways: First, an actor acting on behalf of a firm can enter into a contract which is bounded by the legal system. This allows Firm X to experience the capability and dependability of a Firm Y with regard to a specific task while remaining safeguarded by a legal agreement. If Firm Y is successful in meeting the obligations set forth, then Firm X may begin to feel that Firm Y is a trustworthy firm with whom to conduct business.

Second, an actor acting on behalf of a firm can make a promise which is bound by reputation and the development of emotive ties. Firm X's reputation provides Firm Y with information that shapes their expectation of how Firm X will conduct business. Blois notes that the difference between reputation and trust is subtle. A good reputation does not imply that a firm will act in another firm's interest, only that the firm will live up to the expectations outlined by their reputation. Trust requires the intent of goodwill. While goodwill may or may not be present, firms are generally protective of their reputation because it is used as an indicator of trustworthiness. Thus, at a minimum, firms have an incentive not to purposely act against another firm if other alternatives exist because they have an interest in protecting their reputation.

Face-to-Face Interaction and Trust

Storper and Venables (2004) research emphasizes the role of face-to-face interactions and developing trust in business relationships. Trust emerges as actors spend time, money, and effort towards cultivating and advancing their relationship. The costs associated with developing relationships face-to-face can be substantial, especially when compared to the cost of contact via electronic communication. However, face-to-face meeting symbolically represent the value of the relationship. Face-to-face interaction allows greater transparency of the message being delivered. An actor is able to gauge multiple levels of communication including verbal and nonverbal cues, such as body language, facial expressions and gestures. An actor delivering a message is able to gauge how it is received. Messages delivered through low cost means such as e-mail are muddled and one-dimensional, which can greatly limit the bond of the relationship. When person A goes the extra mile to ensure a message is received and interpreted as intended, it may signal to person B how much person A values the relationship. Storper and Venables' conclude "… the medium *is* the message" (2004, p. 356). That is, the medium is a symbolic representation of how much person A wants to conduct business with person B.

THEORETICAL PRESPECTIVES OF URBAN SOCOIOLOGY

There are two broad areas of study in the field of urban sociology. First is urbanization which is the study of the city and its characteristics. Second is urbanism or the study of participation in city life. This section focuses on the latter. I begin by tracing

its history from the Chicago School and then I discuss symbolic interactionist's

contribution to urban sociology.

The urbanization and urbanism framework grew in the 1920s, with the Chicago

School. Chicago was a prime social laboratory for early American urban sociology. It was

the Midwestern agro-industrial capital, a nodal city for transportation and trade, and a

gateway for foreign immigrants into the American heartland. Society was in the midst of

change. A way of life based on self-sufficiency (Durkheim 1893) and family, tradition and

folkway (Tonnies 1963) was being replaced by rational-will (Tonnies 1963) and mutual

interdependencies (Durkheim 1893).

The Chicago School embraced both quantitative and qualitative methodologies

to study social life; however, the eventual rise of structural functionalism and the social

systems perspective marginalized the school's qualitative, social psychological emphasis.

Early Chicago School research, known as human ecology, studied the relationship

between urban form and social systems through city cartography and census data.

Order was viewed as socially and biologically defined, and the city as an organism

containing a series of natural areas including ethnic enclaves, specialized districts,

income groups, and topography (Park 1952). Economic processes such as the division of

labor resulted in competition, comparative advantage, specialization, and an increase in

size, density and heterogeneity (Burgess 1925; Wirth 1938). These factors, in the view of

human ecologists, negatively impacted social life by weakening social bonds and making

it difficult to achieve moral consensus. Thus the urban experience was reduced to

anomie, a psychological sense of estrangement that erodes any sense of community and the rise of formal integration (ex. police) (Durkheim 1893; Simmel 1950; Wirth 1938).

Symbolic Interaction is derived from the Chicago School, in so far as interactionists view the city as a 'mosaic of social worlds,' uses rich descriptive ethnographic methods, and adopt sociocultural ecology principles. They reject the deterministic view of the city as a place for estrangement or normless. Park (1952) and Wirth (1938), who were influenced by Simmel (1903/1971), are among the first to point to the city as being a different type of interactional space. A city is not simply a large settlement, but rather a unique space worthy of study. Not until Firey's (1945) study of central Boston were the city's spatial patterns understood by exploring the collective values and sentiments rather than economic interests. Firey's emphasis on a city's cultural value has been echoed by others including Wohl and Strauss' (1958) study on city symbolism and Suttle's (1984) study on city artifacts.

Symbolic interactionist contribution to the field of urban sociology is complicated. Many scholars say such contributions do not exist while others perceive them as undervalued or unidentified. Lofland (2003) advocates the latter. While she acknowledged that pairing the interactionist perspective with urban sociology is "an odd couple," she identified and discussed five issues which have been shaped or influenced by those that identify as interactionist and 'fellow-travelers' whose work is influenced by their ideas. The issues are: city as an interactional context, settlement as symbol, interaction spaces and urban relationships, anonymity and interaction, and interaction

and ground-level inequality. Many of these issues will be discussed in more depth below.

The Urban Culturalist Perspective is an emerging perspective with interactionist roots that takes the relationship between culture, place and interaction one step further. Advocates argue that place is essential in any analysis of the social world, as it is inside place—cities, neighborhoods, coffee shops, etc.—that shared meanings are constructed, reconstructed and negotiated. Culture is produced and reproduced by someone located somewhere. An agreed upon definition of culture is "the way people make sense of the world *and* the symbolic and material products that express that way of life" (Borer 2006, p. 175). Other sociological schools—Chicago School, Political Economy and Post-Modernist, respectively—view culture as something that is dependent on something else, or largely neglect it in analysis, or position as a commodity that is manipulated by self-interest groups. Urban culturalists' advocate the study of place should "move beyond simple acknowledgements of "context" toward the realization and documentation of meaningful places and how they facilitate or hinder individual and collective urban experience" (Borer 2006, p. 176). Thus a study of place is not reduced to economics, political structures, or demographic profiles, instead is a "window into the ways people use place as part of their cultural repertoires" (2006, p. 173).

In this research I use the symbolic interactionist perspective, while addressing the issue of culture, without attributing it to a new perspective. This decision is not a

slight or nod in any theoretical direction. I am simply using the most established

framework to date.

An Overview of Place-Based Research

There is no shortage of research in this area of place attachment, which

Patterson and Williams (2005) has broadly classified into two categories, psychometrics

and phenomenology, based on paradigmatic ontology, epistemology and axiology. The

psychometrics approach views the discovery of scientific truth is achievable through the

quantitative operationalization of variables. Phenomenologists do not believe there is

an objective truth that can be attained through research, but rather subjective meaning

and understanding. One ontological framework is not better or worse than the other;

they simply yield different scientific insights. I situate my research in the latter. Despite

their significant differences, both ontological camps emphasize places of emotional

importance such as a house, neighborhood, church or coffee shop, which is often

identified by where one spends a significant amount of time and has emotional

relations.

What is place? Place is analytically different than space (Gieryn 2000). Place is

the result of the ongoing social processes of interaction (Milligan 1998) whereas space is

"detached from material form and cultural interpretation" (Gieryn 2000, p. 465). In the

seminal article "A Space for Place in Sociology," Gieryn (2000) takes sociologists to task

for neglecting place and rendering it 'invisible' in analyses of the social world. He argues

all social processes occur somewhere and these places need be present in our research.

Gieryn's (2000) widely used definition of place is consists of geographic location, material form, and meaning.

Geographic location is both a spot identified by geographic coordinates and by the nested scales we have come to recognize and use in our research, such as urban, suburban and rural, or home, neighborhood and workplace. Gieryn argues that one reason why sociologists' use of place is difficult to understand is we chop up a phenomenon into 'incommunicado bits.' For instance, how do we characterize and understand distinctions such as urban and suburban, particularly when they are made up of the same elements— homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, or public sphere and private sphere? In order to emphasize place and to better distinguish the continuums we create, Gieryn urges sociologists to ask themselves, "what do these places of varying scale have in common and how they differ" (2000, p. 464).

The second feature of place is material form, or the physical 'assemblages of things'. Humans create the physical forms of place, and it is here—'inside' a place— where social processes are experienced and interactions occur. Lofland's (1998) work detailed how the built environment influences human interaction in three ways: how interaction occurs, who interacts with whom, and the content of the interaction. The physical arrangement of space alters, amplifies and constrains how interaction occurs.

The built environment also influences who interacts with whom by creating spaces for different people. Lofland details Victorian houses and New York cabaret as two historical examples. Victorian houses were designed to foster separation between elites their help. Servants and trades people had to use different, often hidden,

entrances to enter and exit the house and servants had separate, isolated living

quarters. The distinction of space indicated status and expected norms. The New York

cabaret is an example of an inclusive space that encouraged spectators and performers

to interact with one another. There was no degree of separation between the

spectators and performers.

The built environment does not determine the content of interactions. However,

place is attached to codes, customs and norms which lend insight into the types of

interactions one expects to occur. For example, an environment such as a public park is

designed for children to (literally) run around and shout and get dirty. The same actions

in another environment such as a church is viewed as disruptive and a violation of a

folkway. In contrast, societal norms dictate using your "inside voice" and wearing your

"Sunday best" in church.

The final feature of place Gieryn discusses is meaning, value and culture. In

Firey's (1945) study of central Boston, several spatial patterns could only be understood

by exploring collective values and sentiments rather than economic interests. The

Boston Common emerged during colonial times when towns allocated a portion of their

land for cow pastures and militia fields. As Boston grew around the Common, a forty-

eight acre tract of land lodged into the heart of the business district, it became a barrier

to business expansion and transportation interests. However, for Bostonians, the

Common represents a historical centerpiece of their community that has been

safeguarded by legal guarantees that forbid the disposal of or change to the space. It is a

'sacred site' tied to cultural value tied to historic sentiment.

Firey emphasized the importance of value and sentiment in seemingly

undesirable places such as the immigrant ghetto. The North End is a lower class Italian

neighborhood that is known as "Boston's classic land of poverty." While a ghetto is

often thought of as "an area of minimum choice," Firey identifies its symbolic

importance to those who live there. The North End offers a correspondence to basic

Italian values—family and paesani or people from the same village of origin. The local

character facilitates participation in customs and social relationships and solidarity that

are important to first generation Italians. For North End residents, the spatial symbolism

represents integration in Italian values and ethnic solidarity. Firey suggests both that

cultural values are ascribed to certain spatial areas and that the spatial processes may

include sentimental meaning in addition to economic factors.

Wolh and Strauss (1958) analyzed how we learn to manage our impressions of a

city's symbols. Symbols are coded shorthand expressions that are easily understood by

audience. Such examples include the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco or the French

Quarter in New Orleans. Wohl and Strauss argue it is not necessary to view the symbol;

one only needs to understand what it represents. The use of symbols evokes images and

sentiments. City symbols are evocative representations of "the massed buildings, the

solidity and density of the agglomeration, the gleaming roofs, the specious neatness and

order that a far view lends the scene, seem to reflect all the energy, the crowdedness,

the opulence and magnificence of the city" (1958, p. 526). Yet, they serve as a mask

because they 'blot out' or allow the viewer to 'disregard' the actual city in favor of

representative façade (which can be favorable or unfavorable). Further, symbols of the

city cannot live up to what they promise as a larger city is greater than its individual

parts.

We also interpret cities through rhetorical devises such as personification and

analogies. Personification allows the city to acquire a biography and a reputation, much

like a person. We give the city characteristics we know and understand. Analogies act in

a similar way as they allow for comparisons with something familiar so we can better

understand the city. Personification, analogies, and featured attributes allow us to

manage our impressions of the city through the use of symbolic characteristics which

create evocative and expressive artifacts that carry value about the larger entity itself.

Place is neither a backdrop of the research setting nor a collection of variables.

Lofland (1998) suggests that place is meaningful and rich in association and sentiment

but anything can be space. The work of Lofland (1998), Firey (1945), Wohl and Strauss

(1958) and others emphasis that place must also be understood in terms of culture

because it broadens our understanding of the city. By situating place central in the

analysis, it becomes an agent with an independent effect of social life.

The Process of Developing Place Attachment

Symbolic interactionists emphasize agency in creating, interpreting and

experiencing place. Milligan defines place attachment as the "emotional link formed by

an individual to a physical site that has been given meaning through interaction" (1998,

p. 2). Place attachment is a process of using our memories of the past and expectations

of the future to impart space with meaning. The process is comprised of two interwoven

components: interactional past and interactional potential.

Interactional past is memories or an actor's past experience within a site. A

person imbues a place with meaning based on the significance of the interactions that

occur. Lofland (1998) categorized secondary relationships with various degrees of

personal significance: fleeting to routinize to quasi-primary to intimate-secondary.

These relationships are often defined by interactions and roles *within* a public setting.

For example, in Katovich and Reese's (1987) study, the relationships between the

bartender and patrons of an urban bar transformed it from a place for economic

exchange based on alcoholic beverages to a place for a "community" of regulars that

call it "home." As Milligan astutely asserts, "… meaning is linked to the idea of the site,

represented by the site and made possible by the site" (1998, p. 9). Meaning, however,

is not static. It is interpreted and reinterpreted over time.

Interactional potential is the expectations or future experiences that are

imagined or anticipated within a site. Interactional potential is closely linked to the traits

of a site including the layout, atmosphere, and positioning of the site. The physical

structure of a site can influence behavior through a process referred to as locational

socialization. The process is one in which we "continually learn about the meaning of

different locations, about what is expected to go on where and who is expected to do it"

(Lofland 1985, p. 69). Atmosphere is the organizational acceptance of certain values and

behaviors. Positioning reflects a site's placement in relation to other places. The

possibility for experiences within a given place based on layout, atmosphere, and

positioning will greatly influence the degree of attachment to it. Milligan concludes, "…

place attachment is significantly based on the meaningfulness of the interaction itself

(which then imbues a site with meaning), not on the inherent meaningfulness of place in

which it occurs" (1998, p. 28).

Dimensions of Interpersonal Interactions in Gatherings

       Erving Goffman's *Behavior in Public Places* (1963) outlines the social organization

of gatherings. Gatherings are defined as two or more people that are co-present with

one another. Such gatherings may be based on a social occasion, or "a wider social

affair, undertaking, or event, bounded in regard to place and time" (1963, p. 18). McCall

(2003, p. 331-2), using the work of Goffman and others, delineates different dimensions

of interpersonal interaction in gatherings and provides insight on existing research:

- *Face-to-face versus mediated interaction*: face-to-face rather than symbols and

  computer-mediated communication is the primary form of interaction

- *Direct versus indirect interaction*: direct, person-to-person communication rather

  than using intermediaries to relay information, studies tend to focus on directed

  interaction

- *Focused versus unfocused interaction*: research tends to be based on single,

  shared focus of attention rather than no shared focus

- *Emergent versus routinized interaction*: research tends to be based on emergent

  experience stemming from sharing the same space rather than relying on

  participants' identities and roles

- *Transient versus recurrent interaction*: transient or one-time interaction tends to be focus, although recurring interaction is possible

- *Unacquainted versus acquainted interaction*: unacquainted interaction tends to be focus of studies

- *Short-term versus long-term interaction*: a focus on the duration of interaction tends to be short-term rather than long-term

- *Directed versus casual interaction*: a focus tends to be on directed interaction, which is the "process of assigning meaning becomes organized in relation to some purpose or aim of one or more of the participants"

- *Identity-directed versus task-directed interaction*: validation of self-concept is purpose of identity-directed interaction whereas accomplishing collaborative task is purpose of task-direction interaction, research tends to focus on identity-directed

Research on gathering interactions is distinctly different from other types of interactions such as organizational-based interactions where membership is formalized and closely regulated, or primary relationships-based interactions where emotional involvement is heightened. I use the work of Goffman, McCall, and others as tools and concepts to understand what interactions are occurring in places.

SUMMARY

Urban researchers have conducted numerous studies to better understand business geography and networks. The research on business networks includes many

areas of focus: the role of geography in developing networks (a firm's spatial proximity to other firms; the use of social venues in clusters; a firm's use of temporary gatherings), establishing the value of networks and the importance of trust, and analyses on the spaces where networks are developed (formal workspaces or leisure settings). This literature has produced many insights—spatial clusters and temporary cluster are both valuable ways to connect to others and the value of business networks is essential to industry competitiveness. However, in regards to the places where networks are developed, especially in temporary places, researchers have more questions than answers. Many posit that formal work places (such as tradeshow floor) are categorically different than social venues. Although we have suspicions and intuition, we do not have empirical evidence to answer the questions: what does the tradeshow floor and social venues have in common? How do they differ from one another? Why are these distinctions important for facilitating or hindering interaction? How does interaction imbue these places with meaning?

I draw upon the work of symbolic interaction to guide my place-based research and to answer these questions. I use the components of place Gieryn identified (geographic location, material form, and meaning) and consider questions raised by Lofland (how does interaction occur? who interacts with whom? what is the content of interaction?). I rely on Milligan's social construction of place attachment, which is structured by memories (interactional past) and expectations (interactional potential), and utilize the dimension of interactions identify by Goffman and McCall to formulate and analyze the meaning of these places.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

My research question is: How do place characteristics shape the way in which exhibitors "do" business? The unit of analysis is tradeshow exhibitors. The focus of analysis is how exhibitors imbue places with meaning. As Blois (1999) notes, a researcher cannot use a single participant to represent an entire organization, as that may bias the results. Furthermore, trust building and communication occurs between actors within organizations, not the organization themselves. That is to say: individuals interact and these interactions shape organizational relationships. An organization in and of itself is unable to engage in interactions. Thus the unit of analysis is exhibitors rather than firms.

The intent was to interview tradeshow exhibitors only; however, through this research I found the distinction between attendee and exhibitor to be somewhat crude. Consider these encounters: 1. I spoke with an exhibitor at CTIA that also purchased products from other exhibiting firms. His experience yielded insights from working in a booth and being a guest inside a booth. 2. I talked with firms that exhibits at G2E but participate in smaller gaming tradeshows as an attendee. However, their purpose for attending the event was the same, though they did not have booth space. 3. I met a gentleman that worked for a large firm with a sizable booth. He did not spend much time in that booth. In fact, he did not even work in the same office as his colleagues. He worked remotely and attended the tradeshow to view competitor's merchandise. He

had no experience as an exhibitor although his badge indicated otherwise. Thus some of my interviews do not fall neatly into a single conclusive category: exhibitor.

My study is informed by the interpretive paradigm. Constructionists critique objectivists (embedded in the positivist paradigm) for the underlying assumption that external reality can be objectively observed by a researcher. The positivist paradigmatic principle is that social scientist can find the truth about the social world through scientific inquiry grounded in rigid methods and the collection of facts. Constructionists reject the Enlightenment notion that there is a single external reality; instead, they embrace the belief that multiple realities exist. Data is framed as a collection of 'views' rather than facts (Charmaz 2002). The social reality of a researcher and participant are dependent on a myriad of factors including our positions, conditions and contingencies, which influence our experiences and construction of data. Constructionists emphasize participant's "definition of terms, situations, and events and try to tap the participant's assumptions, implicit meanings, and tacit rules" (Charmaz 2002, p. 681).

Naturalists and Constructionists both use grounded theory as a data collection and analysis tool. While the ways in which they collect the data are fairly similar, their epistemology or analytical interpretations differ. The epistemological goal for naturalist is a systematic, "variable analysis" that produces abstractions and "generalizations" that is *the* lens by which to view and understand society. The epistemological goal for social constructionist is an "interpretive understanding" aimed at discovering actors' social processes within a specific context (Charmaz 2011, p. 168). As Kathy Charmaz (2007) explains, naturalists use grounded theory to pays close attention to the "why" questions

50

while social constructionists use grounded theory to focus on the "what" and "how"

questions. This allows a researcher to get at participants' construction of meaning and

actions, to obtain their views that can be used to build a conceptual analysis.

The City

Las Vegas gained worldwide recognition over the past few decades as the city

where anything could happen. What began as a small gambling town with roots in

organized crime morphed into an entertainment destination where you could see

performances from Elvis and the Rat Pack. Over time classic Las Vegas establishments

such as the Desert Inn and The Sands were demolished to make room for newer, sexier

venues like The Wynn and Venetian. One can walk down the ever-changing Las Vegas

Strip today and see the Eifel Tower, the skyline of New York City or an exploding

volcano, while card flippers distribute business-card-sized pictures of nearly naked

females seeking companionship. Inside any of the elaborate thirty-plus casinos you will

find an abundance gaming tables (legal gambling) and alcoholic beverages that are

served twenty-four hours a day by scantily-clad women. There is a seemingly endless

amount of famous restaurants as well as world class shopping and multi-million dollar

entertainment productions. Around the time stores begin to close and famous

entertainers wrap up, nightclubs catering to your most elaborate party fantasy are just

starting to open. In need of something a bit more titillating? A short ride from the Strip

is dozens of topless and totally nude adult clubs, or just over an hour drive visitors can

find themselves just outside the county limits where prostitutes can legally service their clients' sexual desires.

Eating, drinking, smoking, gambling, shopping, dancing, overt sexual stimulation, it is all readily available. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), who is tasked with promoting the city, along with R&R Partners, captured and marketed this side of Las Vegas in a pithy one-liner that is the crux of the city's enormously successful advertising campaign. "What Happens Here, Stays Here" told the world that Las Vegas is a city where you will not be judged by your actions during what sociologists refer to as a 'moral holiday'. Engaging in activities that you would never do at home, that is exactly what Las Vegas was about. Rob O'Keefe with R&R Partners reflected on developing Las Vegas as a brand:

> For Las Vegas we boil it down to two words "Adult Freedom." This is the essence of the Las Vegas brand and sets up our positioning statement— "Adult Freedom means Las Vegas is the place where you do things you can't or wouldn't do anywhere else." This is the guiding principle for the entire marketing effort. (Rob O'Keefe, *WHHSH Story,* Fall 2007 Travel Marketing Decisions)

In addition to the tagline, commercials told stories about people visiting Las Vegas. Some were mildly suggestive and titillating while others pushed the boundaries of what of some felt were of good decorum. The first television spot involved what O'Keefe describes as "a very seductive woman taking a limo ride to the airport who upon entering the limo has transformed from her 'Vegas-self'." Another commercial features a good-looking man trying on the role of a neurosurgeon, life guard, formula two race car driver, hand model, big game hunter, cage fighter, lumberjack, author, and lawyer as he introduces himself to beautiful females in nightclubs and lounges up and

52

down the Strip. In a similar commercial, an attractive female introduces herself to various men using different personas. She was Cindy, Jan, Marcia—drawing upon *The Brady Bunch*—Charlotte, Carrie, Miranda, Samantha—a nod to the successful *Sex in the City* franchise— Rachel, Monica, Phoebe—from the hit sitcom *Friends.* In yet another commercial, a man is on an airplane with his friend who takes a shot of liquor and declares "the party starts now." Upon arriving in Las Vegas his friend, playing the role of a devil on his shoulder, encourages him to do things he may not do otherwise. His devilish friend tells him "this is all for the taking, all for the pillaging…" while motioning towards the Strip.

The campaign successfully created buzz throughout the U.S. and worldwide. "What Happens Here, Stays Here" quickly became a part of popular vernacular and lifted Las Vegas as a brand to infamy. As LVCVA stated, "The campaign was referenced on *The Tonight Show*, *The Today Show*, CSPAN, *Buchanan and Press*, CNBC, *Las Vegas* TV series, *CSI* TV series, as well as countless articles in magazines such as *Time* and *The New York Times Magazine*… The line has passed through the lips of everyone from Oscar host Billy Crystal to [then] first lady Laura Bush." In 2007, Las Vegas was named the second most recognizable brand after Google (LVCVA 2007—Imagepower Newsmaker Brands Survey) and "What Happen Here, Stay Here" still remains the most popular city slogan to date (TAGL!NEGURU 2012).

In a period of prolonged recession a brand based solely on leisure and luxury is bound to experience hardship. Las Vegas was so successfully branded as the center of

adult freedom in the years preceding the economic downturn, that once the tide turned

the city was rendered trivial and wasteful.

In 2009, LVCVA launched the "Vegas Means Business" campaign to boost the

city's meetings and conventions industry. The campaign, which is part of larger

campaign by the U.S. Travel Association, undertook a single challenge: highlight the

value of hosting a meeting or convention. This endeavor is important as the industry is

worth millions to the Las Vegas region. In the past eighteen years, the city successfully

hosted a majority of the 250 largest conventions, surpassing every other city in the U.S.

(Tradeshow News Network). In 2011, Las Vegas hosted 55 of the 250 largest

conventions. Orlando followed a distance second with 26 and Chicago was third with 21.

In 2011, the city hosted 4,865,272 convention delegates and 19,029 conventions

(LVCVA, 2012). LVCC is one of the largest convention and meeting facilities in the world

at 3.2 million square feet of space (approximately two million square feet of exhibit

space, more than 241,000 square feet (or 144) meeting rooms, and more than 225,000

square feet of lobby and registration area) (VegasMeansBusiness.com, September 13,

2012). The findings from Exhibit Surveys 2012 found that Las Vegas tradeshow delegates

spend more time on the trade floor—11 hours compared to 5.9 - 9.5 in other cities.

Further, tradeshow attendance increases an average of 15% when a show rotates to Las

Vegas while decreasing an average of 6% when rotating out.

The Field: Tradeshow Floor

I attended two conferences and tradeshows, Catersource and Exhibitor2013, to get acquainted with the field. The tradeshow for Catersource was held at the Las Vegas Convention Center while the convention took place at Mirage Hotel and Casino. Exhibitor2013's tradeshow and convention were held at Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino. I gained access to both tradeshows by volunteering as a door monitor during conference sessions. I spent a total of 26.5 hours observing tradeshow and conference spaces (see Appendix A). This enabled me to practice taking field notes and to gain acute insights which helped me prepare for data collection in the field.

I selected two business-to-business (B2B) tradeshow for data collection. B2B tradeshows are open to industry professionals only, not the general public, and often require credentials. The B2B tradeshows I attended are technology-based (defined broadly) industries. I focus on technology tradeshows because they promote non-standardized products and technical services. Exhibitors must reach out to potential customers (which can be targeted prior to the shows through the purchase an attendee list) and customers to discuss technical issues and product alterations and innovations. Previous research indicates that this is best achieved through face-to-face interaction. Standardized products, on the other hand, slightly vary from one another. Products differ in colors, shapes, materials, design, or accessories; however, the function of the product is relatively unchanged. In the case of standardized products, creating a distinction between brands and products is the goal of exhibiting. But, generally speaking, this merchandise can be ordered sight unseen.

I attended International CTIA Wireless on May 21-23, 2013 and Global Gaming Expo on September 24-26, 2013. Each tradeshow and convention was held at Sands Conventions Expo Center, adjacent to the Las Vegas Strip. Power and Jansson (2008) and Bathelt and Schuldt (2008) each produced their research from attending two tradeshows. I collected data in a fashion that allowed me to build upon, test, and seek clarification on emerging themes and concepts. I began data collection in May 2013 and completed my last interview in January 2014. I interviewed exhibitors on the tradeshow floor and in-person at an alternative location (Starbucks) and by telephone once the tradeshow was over.

To gain access to the field, I consulted with my dissertation committee members to see if they had any contacts at these tradeshows. To access CTIA, Dr. Curtis Love put me in contact with a representative at Freeman, a convention and tradeshow management company hired to facilitate that show. I spoke with the gentleman from Freeman's and he granted me access to the tradeshow. My badge identified me at a "researcher" from "Brookings Mountain West" (I believe he got this information from my email signature, as I introduced myself as a graduate student at UNLV and Dr. Love emailed him my prospectus); however, on the floor I introduced myself as a graduate student from UNLV.

I contacted Dr. Bo Bernhard for access to G2E tradeshow and he delivered an all access pass to the tradeshow and convention. I was also copied on correspondence between Dr. Bernhard and his associate who was seeking volunteers to help with the National Center for Responsible Gaming Conference, which took place two days before

G2E. I volunteered to work a morning shift in the information booth. In exchange for our time, volunteers received tradeshow floor access to G2E. (Although I did not need the pass since I had already received one from Dr. Bernhard.) My tradeshow badge identified me as a "student" at University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Data Collection

I employed several collection techniques in this study: field observation, secondary data, informal conversations, and structured interviews. Participant observation is a method that will allow me to observe tradeshow participants. All field observations took place on and around the tradeshow floor. Throughout my time in the field I recorded the events and interactions that took place around me in a standard notebook.

In addition to recording my observations, I engaged tradeshow exhibitors in "informal" or "causal" interviews as well as in-depth interviews. Causal interviewing is asking participants questions during the course of naturally occurring activity (Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland 2006). For example, I causally interviewed a tradeshow exhibitor by asking him a few questions while we sat next to each other in the lobby. I recorded my observations and causal interviews in a data log during (when appropriate) or after events.

The secondary data I collected included content from mainstream and industry media publications, press releases, social media, and websites.

I engaged in in-depth, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews. I obtained the

majority of my interviews by approaching people on the floor; however, I did receive

two interviews by referral (snowball sampling) and two through my social network

(friend of a friend gave me someone's contact information). Some of my structured

interviews occurred on the tradeshow floor and the other half took place in-person or

by telephone.

In-depth interviews are used:

"… if one is interested in questions of greater depth, where the
knowledge sought is often taken for granted and not readily articulated
by most members, where the research question involves highly conflicted
emotions, where different individuals or groups involved in the same line
of activity have complicated, multiple perspectives on some
phenomenon…" (Gubrium and Holstein, Eds.; Johnson 2002, p. 105)

In-depth interviews were tape recorded when possible, provided the participant

had no objections and the setting allows for such.

I used an interview guide as a tool to create a dialogue between myself and

respondents. The interview guide consists of open-ended questions that allow a

conversation to unfold without forcing the participant to select pre-established

responses. Of course the questions in my interview guide changed as the analysis

progresses. Analytic direction will emerge throughout the data collection process

(Charmaz 2002).

Adler and Adler (2002) note the challenges and strategies of interviewing a

reluctant participant. Participants may be reluctant to partake in an interview if the

topic is considered sensitive, such as sexual content, drug use or relational problems or

if participants are in an advantaged position and wish to protect specific information

and goals. It is entirely possible that participants in this study may fit into both of these

categories at times. Furthermore, participants may engage in certain behaviors and

activities off the tradeshow floor that would be frowned upon on the tradeshow floor.

The roles we embody when we are at work are often times different from the roles we

embody when we are in leisure spaces. However, often times when a tradeshow

exhibitor is in a leisure space in a temporary cluster he is still considered to be working.

Participants may wish to protect the activities that they participate in social venues for

fear of those actions negatively affecting them in the professional realm. I have asked

myself the ethical question, how far should a participant be probed on a specific topic?

Johnson (2002) suggests that the interviewer follow the participant where he or she

may lead.

　　　Adler and Adler suggest two competing strategies to overcome reluctance when

approaching participants for an interview. First, a researcher may facilitate a 'one-off'

detached relationship with a participant, which provides him with a sense of anonymity.

Some researchers believe that as a participant's anonymity increases so too does his

likelihood for self-disclosure. On the other hand, some researchers believe that

establishing rapport and building cooperation with the participant is paramount to

delving deeper into sensitive topics. My initial interview strategy is to establish rapport

and build cooperation. This allowed me to contact participants (providing they agree to

it) with any additional questions or insights in the future. However, if this strategy does

not work then I will employ Adler and Adler's recommendation of detachment. In this

case, I did not ask for permission to follow up with participants.

I used two sampling techniques to conduct interview: purposive sampling and

snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is appropriate when a researcher wants to learn

about variation across cases. I strategically selected participants who may be positioned

differently within the industry (Lofland *et al.* 2006). I actively sought out trendsetter and

gate-keeping firms (this information can be acquired through tradeshow promotional

materials and by firms' location on tradeshow floor), firms of different size (small firms /

large firms), founding dates (new firms / established firms), and locales (regions /

nations). By strategically selecting participants, I reduced the prospect of error and bias

through premature theorization and conclusion, as it will encourage me to engage

participants in other situations and assure my understanding of the social phenomenon

still applies (Glaser and Strauss 1976). In addition to purposive sampling, I used

snowball sampling. Snowball sampling relies on a participant's social network to identify

potential participants for a research. This sampling strategy is particularly helpful to

engage reluctant participants, as it may be perceived that a participant is vouching for

me to his colleague (Adler and Adler 2002).

Throughout my duration in the field, my status was noted in the context that

Lofland *et al.* (2006, p. 40) outline: "the announcement and clarification of one's

research identity is typically confined to interaction with key gatekeepers rather than

reiterated in the course of interaction with each member in subsequent encounters." I

revealed my researcher status to key gatekeepers and exhibitors that I interviewed, but

I did not reveal my researcher status to every person I encounter.

Confidentiality is often viewed as a fundamental obligation of field researchers

(Lofland *et al.* 2006). Personal information will only be listed on the informed consent

form. Interview transcripts, field notes and observations, and all other materials will not

include any identifying information. Furthermore, all materials related to this study will

be stored in a locked file and/or in Goggle's data cloud. All participants will be given a

pseudonym in my final report.

An interview will yield the following data (Lofland *et al.* 2006):

1. Consent informed form

2. A brief fact sheet with basic demographic information about interviewee

3. Transcript of the interview

4. Field notes relevant to my encounter with interviewee

5. My personal emotional experience of the interview

6. Methodological challenges and successes

7. Ideas, questions, puzzlements that arise

My data collection methodologies were approved by UNLV Institutional Review Board

(IRB) (Appendix B).

Gender and Researcher – Researched Dynamics

How does a female researcher's gender impact the researcher-researcher

relationship during interviews? Williams and Heikes (1993) document how male nurses

framed their responses to questions according to the researcher's gender. Their

findings suggest that respondents "used the interviewer's gender as a cue to gauge the

interviewer's orientations and opinions, and they developed their responses within that

gendered context" (1993, p. 288). That is, how the respondents discussed their

experiences differed according to the interviewer's gender; although the content and

sentiment discussed by the respondents was relatively consistent regardless of the

gender of the interviewer. The authors suggest that the gender of the researcher does

not pose an 'insurmountable barrier' to establishing rapport and achieving reliable

results. Gurney's (1985) experience as a female graduate student researcher with a

youthful appearance, positioned her as being 'nonthreatening' and 'naïve'. She found

that her attributes eased interviewees' anxieties about her presence in the field and

allow her to establish rapport. Conversely, she reflected that her research was more

difficult in other ways, such as not being taken seriously and perhaps being excluded

from important meetings because she was not able to establish enough trust. However,

this allowed her to maintain enough distance from interviewees and to critically

examine the setting.

    Gurney (1985), Arednell (1997), and Gailey and Prohasks (2011) each discussed

the difficulties they experienced as female researchers who interviewed men. The men,

perhaps do to their dominant status position within society, were not reflexive about

what they said or who they said it too. For example, Gurney, who spent six months

researching the economic crime unit at the prosecutor's office, recounts the ECU

director handling of a rape case. After the pre-trail questioning of the rape victim, he

shared with his colleagues what Gurney refers to as his 'comic routine' about the

questioning:

> … Now, did you enjoy it? Come on, you can tell me. Did you like it? Now,
> you say that you were standing at the bus stop when this guy pulled over
> and grabbed you. What did you do to make him do that? … (Gurney 1985,
> p. 54)

While other members of the (predominantly male) office seemed amused, Gurney

became so uncomfortable that she made up an excuse to leave short thereafter.

Arendell had a similar experience with interviewing divorced fathers. "Most

(interviewees) seemed impervious to the possibility that I might be offended by sexist

remarks, or inclined to include myself among those—women—being demeaned…. The

denigration of women was extensive." (Arendell 1997, p. 359). In addition, she faced

other uncomfortable situations such as rebuffing sexual advances, superfluous

questioning for personal informal and enduring commentary regarding the way she

looked. Arendell notes that she did not face these challenges in her study on divorced

mothers. When Gailey and Prohaska interviewed men about sensitive issues of sexually

degrading practices, respondents had "no trouble making derogatory remarks about

women" (2011, p. 377). Furthermore, the authors endured commentary about their

style of hair and weight as well as direct sexual advances.

No doubt these experiences were uncomfortable, but perhaps the bigger

challenge for these researchers was remaining non-confrontational. Arendell reflects:

"hearing these exchanges on tape is sobering: by my silence was I condoning the re-

enactment of the gender stratified order, allowing these particular participants to relate

to me in a stereotypical fashion?"(1997, p. 358). Gailey and Prohasks (2011) experience

similar discord about remaining silent about a classist, sexist or other derogatory remarks. On the one hand, the researchers found they had to remain non-conformational to facilitate the interview and to truly hear those they interviewed.

Female researchers must consolidate their personal beliefs with the realities of research. When Arendell pondered whether she did the right thing by remaining silent, she concluded: "for now, my answer for myself is this: I set out to study divorced fathers, wanting to hear about their experiences and perceptions, and so needed to allow them to tell their stories in their own fashion, whatever the context, style or tone" (1997, p. 363). Gurney's (1985) viewed her tolerance of sexism as rooted in her 'gratitude toward setting members'. Gailey and Prohasks were more pointed because they obtained the data and were able to publish findings. "We had the last word" (2011, p. 379).

How do female researchers deal with the challenges noted above? First, it is recommended that female researchers anticipate the possibility of an uncomfortable situation. Gurney (1985) suggests that by acknowledging a potential complication prior to entering the setting, the researcher will have opportunity to create a response that does not embarrass the respondent while simultaneously promoting consideration of the researcher's role. Gailey and Prohaska (2011) recommend journal writing and de-brief with a colleague to manage the difficult or uncomfortable situations and emotions that may arise. Female researchers are also advised to wear professional attire and very little make up to avoid appearing 'provocative' (Gurney 1985; Gailey and Prohaska 2011).

Data Analysis

I use grounded theory method to analyze my data. Grounded theory is an inductive, thematic approach to data collection and analysis. The approach is used to derive theory from an analysis of patterns, theme and common categories discovered in data. The data is the written account of my observations and the transcription of the interviews. Data collection and analysis are done concurrently; thus I will record my observations and transcribe my interviews and analyze the data throughout my time in the field.

The first step of analyzing the data is through the use of codes. Codes are used to "organiz[e] ideas applied to the items or chunks of data in your field notes or other materials… or, more abstractly, [codes are] the labels we use to classify items of information as pertinent to a topic, question, answer, or whatever" (Lofland *et al.* 2006, p. 200). Codes are built inductively through the process of analyzing the data and are considered provisional until they are repeatedly present or significantly absent in a study (Corbin and Strauss 1990).

I began by using an open coding procedure (sometimes referred to as initial coding) which emphasizes the reading and rereading each line in the interview transcript and field notes. Lofland *et al.* (2006, p. 201) list several questions a researcher should ask herself when she begins to code: What is this? What does it represent (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 63)? What is this an example of (Cuba 1988, p. 35)? What is going on? What are people doing? What is the person saying? What do these actions

and events take for granted? How do the structure and context serve to support, maintain, impede, or change these actions and statements (Charmaz 2001, p. 142)? Another strategy Charmaz (2011) suggests is to label each line, to the extent possible, in short active terms to "preserve action and promote seeing the social process". The use of gerunds or the noun form of verb (-ing) allows a researcher to see what is happening in the data and to break through conventional ways of thinking about the phenomenon being study. Charmaz (2002) also recommends drawing upon sensitizing concepts to begin coding data. "Questions that researchers might ask about sensitizing concepts include the following: (a) What, if anything, does the concept illuminate about these data? (b) How, if at all, does the concept specifically apply here? (c) Where does the concept take the analysis?" (2002, p. 684).

After I read through and open coded interview transcripts and field notes, I then employ focused coding. Focused coding is more focused than line by line open coding, as it builds on codes through the use of categorization. A category weaves together the most significant or frequent codes. This allows the researcher to ask broad analytical questions such as (Lofland *et al.*2006): Of what topic, unit, or aspect is this an instance? What question about a topic does this item of data suggest? What sort of an answer to a question about a topic does this item of data suggestion? Categories are used by the researcher to move beyond data description to abstraction of the social phenomenon. To ensure validity of my categories, I use new data (obtained through new interviews) to make comparison and ensure the analytic categories are precise. This may require

constant adjusting and readjusting of my initial codes and categories. I will continue

data collection until each category is saturated and no new information is found.

While data collection and analysis occurs concurrently, so does memo writing.

Researchers use memos for "analytic and theoretical utility" (Lofland *et al.* 2006, p.

210). Through the memo writing process, researchers begin to think about the data by

first writing about codes then shift from codes to categories, and then conceptualizing

the relationships between categories. Code memos identify and describe codes and

their meanings (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Categorical memos "define the properties of

each category; specify conditions under which each category develops, is maintained,

and changes; and note the consequences of each category and its relationship with

other categories" (Charmaz 2002, p. 687). Strauss and Corbin (1990) also recommend

memoing about methodological issues that arise in the data collection and analysis

process. Memos can vary in length from a few sentences to a few paragraphs to a few

pages. They are the basis upon which a paper is written.

Lofland *et al.* (2006) suggest the following computer file format to store codes

and categories (see pages 204-209 for details):

1. Setting-specific files contain the materials for descriptive accounts and empirical

   base for demonstrating my time in the field:

   a. A set of files for the actors I encounter

   b. A set of files for activities or events actors participate in

   c. A set of files for the place and space in which actors and their actions are

      situated

2. Analytic (category) files- a file for each analytic theme

3. Methodological and fieldwork files- files of my research experiences out in the field

4. Chronological record is a record of the materials in the order in which I collected them

Validity

In addition to accounting for error and bias through my sampling selection and constant comparison of codes and categories to new data, I will use triangulation, participant feedback and reflexivity to reduce error and ensure the validity of my findings. Triangulation is the use of multiple methods, in this case participant observation, casual interviews and in-depth interviews to evaluate the findings. As noted above, I will follow up with interviewees to see if my findings accurately represent their experiences (unless I use a detached form of interviewing). I will ask for feedback or clarification to ensure I am properly capturing their experiences. Finally, I will account for myself and my experiences in conducting this research. A primary critique against positivists is the notion that research and researchers are neutral and value free. Being reflexive allows me to address my role in the field.

CHAPTER 4:

SPONTANEITY VERSUS STRUCTURE: THE USE OF TIME AT A TRADESHOW

A tradeshow is an event. An event is defined, in part, as something that occurs in

a certain place during a specific period of time. But what do we mean when we talk

about place with regard to tradeshows? The physical settings of CTIA and G2E are in Las

Vegas, Nevada. The manifest function of each event occurs in Sands Expo and

Convention Center, which consists of a large exhibition hall ("the tradeshow floor") and

adjacent convention halls. CTIA and G2E also utilize other places within Las Vegas that

are deeply intertwined with the event, such as functional spaces like hotels and airports

as well as entertainment and social venues where work and leisure collide. How do

exhibitors view time while in these places?

EXHIBITOR, which I attended in January 2013, is a tradeshow and convention for

exhibitors and other event professionals focused on best practices for executing

successful tradeshows and events. The themes discussed at EXHIBITOR are a clear

indication of hot topics concerning exhibitors and event professionals. These are the

topics discussed in industry books and lectured on by experts on speaking circuits and in

professional workshops. The range of topics at the convention was diverse; however,

several were directly and indirectly dedicated to the theme of time. Workshops included

Stop Wasting Time – Organize Your Planning with Templates, *Don't Waste My Time:*

Make Trade Shows Worth Their High Costs, *Take Time to Invest in the Best Use of Your*

Time, The Art of an Effective Booth Presentation, *Gathering the RIGHT Crowd –*

Engagement Strategies that Attract, Retain, and Qualify a Target Audience.

What follows in this chapter is a nod to the exhibitors' awareness of time, the role it plays in the creation of a tradeshow's meaning, and how exhibitors use their time. I argue the finite existence of CTIA and G2E do not make it less significant to the people who participate; rather, the social processes that occur are more important because of what is achieved in a short amount of time. As such, time is not viewed with whimsy and spontaneity; it is constructed as valuable and approached with careful planning. In this chapter, I begin by examining what CTIA and G2E (the events) mean to the exhibitors, and then I discuss how the meaning of the event shapes exhibitors' awareness of time, how they use time, how their perception of time limits interaction in the booth, and how they structure spontaneity.

The Meaning of a Tradeshow

Tradeshows are highly orchestrated events. The meaning of an event can be derived in many different ways. The meaning-makers of a tradeshow include tradeshow organizers, who often work at the behest of a trade organization, as well as exhibitors and attendees. Organizers and trade associations assign meaning to the event by carefully selecting language and crafting messaging about the show that is then distributed in the association's promotional materials, social media, mainstream media, and picked up by other entities such as trade publications, exhibitors and attendees.

Figure 1 highlights the direct and indirect value of participating in CTIA and G2E

as publicized on their respective websites, which is where participates must to go

register to attend the event. Similar language also appears in press releases, association

materials, trade publications, and on social media, to name a few. CTIA and G2E both

used the same word to tout their events. They are "premier" which denote their rank as

being step above or at the top of all comparable events. The show's importance is

reinforced through indirectly evocative messaging, such as "everyone who's anyone will

be there… including your competition" and "keep your business and career on track to

successfully manage this though economic climate." These widely distributed

statements help to develop expectations and construct a deeper meaning to the show.

Figure 3 Exemplars of the Language Used on CTIA and G2E Websites to Emphasize the Value of Participating in a Tradeshow

CTIA
- Everyone who's anyone will be there... including your competition.
- More deals for mobile will be done 9.9.2014 – 9.11.2014 than any other time of year.
- Super Mobility Week will convene the entire wireless ecosystem—a $1 trillion marketplace—for this *premier* global event on mobile innovation.

Global Gaming Expo
- The *premier* tradeshow and conference event for the international gaming industry
- Networking. Education. Business Insight.
- Keep your business and career on track to successfully manage this tough economic climate, to thrive today and in the future.

Notes: Italics used for emphasis
Sources: http://www.supermobilityweek.com; http://www.globalgamingexpo.com

Exhibitors do not attend just for the sake of it. It's about not letting competition get a step ahead of you; it's about attaining a professional edge. Organizers also use direct messaging to convey the value of the event. It is a place to do deals, network, and gain business insights—all explicit workplaces objectives.

To assist in the creation of a premier environment that allows one to stay a step ahead of their competition and attain a professional edge, tradeshow organizers establish tangible boundaries that determine who can partake in the event. Organizers label the show as a place for those is the "mobile marketplace" and "international gaming industry." Designated audiences include "business-to-business" and "trade only." Certain populations are targeted such as trade association members, and selected groups are encouraged to participate and incentivized, generally through reduced pricing. Outsiders are not only discouraged from attending the show, they are prohibited. Tradeshow organizers require industry credentials upon registration.

Although tradeshow organizers create an event and work to crafts its narrative, exhibitors and attendees do not simply accept it as "premier." Actors possess agency that is used to construct, reify and circulate a show's meaning. The intricate process of constructing meaning includes internalizing external factors, such as receiving the association's messages about the tradeshow, as well as internal factors such as expectation and motivations for attending the event or recalling past experiences to determine what is possible at the event. The exhibitors I spoke with overwhelmingly anticipated and experienced CTIA and G2E as a temporary place where professionals

who share technical language and possess a common understanding of the challenges and triumphs of an industry come together to "do" business.

Further, exhibitors internalize how others, specifically their peers, view the event. The lack of booth space at "important" shows like CTIA and G2E is a sign of something "ominous." It causes people to question, "what happen to them?" or "why don't they have a booth?" An exhibitor's lack of participation can be taken as a slight, as one exhibitor told me. "You would get a lot of people that would say, 'if you're not going to invest in the industry, why would I invest in you?" To exhibitors, participating in a tradeshow is not just to assess the competition or network; it is a meaningful place for "us" – the professionals of the mobile and gaming industries. It signals that a firm is "a played in the industry" and "stable."

Exhibitors rely on internal and external inputs to determine their interactional potential, or what interactions are possible in a given place. They draw their own conclusions of whether or not a show is worth of spending time and money. If an exhibitor did not benefit, then the physical and financial cost would outweigh the return on investment and he would not participate in subsequent shows. The exhibitors viewed the show as an important industry event. They acknowledged that their peers and customers view it in a similar way (and exhibitor and attendee attendance lends further credence it's the show importance). I heard continuously from exhibitors large and small, what is achieved at CTIA and G2E cannot be achieved or replicated through other means. These shows are *the* industry event to assess the competition, gain visibility,

network, and make deals. The return on exhibiting makes the emotional, physical and financial costs worthwhile, and shapes their use of time.

Recognition of Temporality

Temporary clusters are unique because the notion of time cannot be taken for granted. The physical existence of a tradeshow is short-lived, as are the advantages of being there. CTIA and G2E both occur over the course of 4 days, annually. Overall, the exhibitors are often in town for a total of four to five days, depending on travel and set up. The exhibition hall is operational for six hours on the first two days and five hours on the third and final day—seventeen hours total. So what does the events finite existence mean?

The finite existence of the show meant time spent at the event was viewed as valuable. Because it is valuable, the exhibitors and attendees are willing to invest their time and money to participate and plan accordingly. For exhibitors, the decision to exhibit is not made lightly. An exhibiting firm will often spend months preparing for CTIA and G2E. They are financially responsible for everything from renting booth space and basic props like carpet and a table to having their merchandise shipped and delivered to Las Vegas, flying staff to and from Las Vegas, staff's food and lodging, as well as entertainment and other expenses. At CTIA and G2E, expenses can easily range from a few thousand dollars, for a basic booth with minimal staffing, to hundreds of thousands and even millions of dollars. I spoke with one exhibitor, who was one of the largest firms exhibiting in terms of physical space and number of staff, whose firm spent three

percent of their annual revenue on the show. A quick google search on this publicly

traded company and I figured they spent roughly 3.5 million dollars. Of course the

amount a firm spends is relative, but these must be *some* return on investment.

Figure 4 CTIA Schedule at a Glance for Day One: Tuesday, May 21, 2013

CTIA Events

Registration	8:00 - 5:00 PM
Media Hive & Media Registration	8:00 - 5:00 PM
CTIA VIP Club	8:00 - 5:00 PM
Keynote Session	9:00 - 11:00 AM
Exhibit Floor Open	11:00 - 5:00 PM
CTIA Thought Leadership Conference	11:00 - 5:00 PM
CTIA B!G Idea Awards Ceremony	2:00 - 2:30 PM
3rd Annual LATAM Mobile Marketing Summit	3:00 - 7:00 PM

Partner Events

Breakfast: Designing Tomorrow's Wireless Network	7: 00 - 8:45 AM
CONNECTIONS (Parks Associates)	10:30 - 5:00 PM
ATIS Executive Roundtables	11:00 - 3:30 PM
CDG Forum: CDMA-LTE Interworking	11:00 - 1:00 PM
Future of Mobile Payments	11:00 - 12:00 PM
M-Commerce- What the Future Holds (WFH)	11:00 - 12:00 PM
Mobile Backhaul: Core Network Interoperability	11:00 - 2:00 PM
The App Summit	11:00 - 5:30 PM
Big Data: Harnessing the Power (Adobe)	12:00 - 1:00 PM
iOS App Market Trends	12:00 - 1:00 PM
Tower & Small Cell Summit	12:00 - 5:30 PM
The Unseen ROI Mobil Marketing Scams (Cloudmark)	1:00 - 2:00 PM
What's Next in Home Automation	1:00 - 2:00 PM
Make, Move & Monetize for Mobile-The-Hollywood Way	2:00 - 5:00 PM
Mobile Device Protection	2:00 - 3:00 PM
5 Trends Shaping the Content Industry	3:00 - 4:00 PM
Innovation Showcase Rapid Fire Pitches	3:30 - 5:00 PM
Accenture Executive Reception (Invite Only)	5:30 - 7:00 PM

Source: copied verbatim from CTIA 2013 Official Floor Guide

Tradeshow organizers pack a lot of activity into the four days. Figure 3 outlines

the myriad of activities that occurred on the first day at CTIA, while Figure 4 delineates

activities over the course of four days at G2E. The figures highlight the amount of

organizational activities, such as informational and educational conference sessions,

professional groups meetings and keynotes that occurred. Thus, while on the floor, the

exhibitors must contend with the trade floor environment (to be discussed in more

detail in Chapter 5), other exhibitors—1,100 at CTIA and 450 at G2E, ancillary events,

and sometimes even the host city for attendees' time.

Figure 5 G2E Schedule at a Glance, 2013

Monday, September 23

G2E 101	9:00 - 4:15 PM
IAGA at G2E	9:00 - 4:15 PM
G2E Advanced Gaming Institute	9:00 - 4:15 PM
Security & Surveillance Institute	9:00 - 4:45 PM
Social Media Boot Camp	9:00 - 4:15 PM
iGaming Congress	9:00 - 4:15 PM
iGaming Networking Reception	5:00 - 6:30 PM
Casino Design Award Reception	5:30 - 7:00 PM

Tuesday, September 24

Opening Day Keynote: The Second City	10:30 AM
Exhibit Hall	10:00 - 5:00 PM
NIGA Lounge & Networking Reception	11:30 - 1:00 PM
Global Gaming Women Luncheon	12:00 - 2:00 PM
Entertainment Showcase & Networking	12:00 - 2:00 PM
Fremont St. Experience	2:00 - 3:00 PM
Table Games Networking Lounge & Reception	3:30 - 5:00 PM
Regulators Networking Reception	3:30 - 5:00 PM
Entertainment Showcase & Networking	3:30 - 5:30 PM
Welcome Reception: Hot Havana Nights!	5:30 - 7:30 PM

Wednesday, September 25

Global Gaming Women Networking Breakfast	7:30 - 9:00 AM
Exhibit Hall	10:00 - 5:00 PM
Latin America Gaming Networking Lounge & Reception	11:30 - 1:00 PM
AGA Communication Awards & Networking Lunch	12:45 - 1:45 PM
Ultra Lounge Uniform Fashion Show	1:00 - 3:00 PM
Fremont St. Experience	2:00 - 3:00 PM
Emerging Leaders Networking Reception	4:00 - 6:30 PM

Thursday, September 26

Tribal Gaming Keynote	9:00 AM
Exclusive Conference Keynote	9:15 - 10:15 AM
Exhibit Hall	10:00 - 3:00 PM
State of the Industry Keynote	10:30 AM
Tribal Gaming Networking Lunch	12:45 - 1:45 PM

Source: compiled from Global Gaming Expo 2013 Event Guide

Further, not all hours on the floor are equal. The ebb and flow of tradeshow attendance is well known among exhibitors and organizers, and I observed this trend in the four tradeshows I attended as part of this research. The first day of the show is often the busiest, as it starts a day or two after the convention. The result is more attendees walking the floor and wandering in and out of the booths, which means more competition for attention. The last day is often cited as the least busy as a substantial amount of attendees leave town before the show officially ends. While this is a small boon for exhibitors, as it may allow them to devote more individualized attention, by this time many are also tired and anxious to get home. Tradeshows are physical exhausting. I witnessed many exhibitors packing it in, sort to speak, before the show officially ended. I also witnessed exhibitors who were doing one last push to accomplish their goals before the show closed.

"Make the Most of It": The Use of Time ON the Floor

I asked several exhibitors to characterize time on the tradeshow floor. They felt that time was "limited." Some experienced time as "fleeting" and "scarce." A few spoke about the "competitive" nature of securing time with attendees on and off the floor. The section below examines how the exhibitors make the most of their time inside in the booth. I discuss how exhibitors prioritize their objectives and characterize their interactions with attendees while in the booth.

Prioritizing Objectives

The exhibitors make the most of their time in the booth by prioritizing

objectives. Prioritizing objectives means aligning organization goals with their

interactional potential an environment. Figure X lists exhibitors' most frequently cited

objectives to accomplish in the booth. The objectives are diverse and work-oriented; the

relationships are defined by work and interaction is oriented on promoting a product or

brand. Specific objectives range from answering questions and problem solving to

meeting customers and establishing leads to branding a firm and showcasing its

products and services.

Figure 6 The Exhibitors Most Frequently Cited Objectives to Accomplish in the Booth	
Answer questions and problem solve	Introduce products to marketplace
Collect business cards	Meet new customers and colleagues
Develop new relationships	Obtain commitment for follow up discussion
Educate attendees on products/services	Reinforce existing relationships
Establish leads	Sell products/services
Gauge consumer interest in products/services	Showcase firm, products/services

Often, exhibitors align their objectives with the unique opportunity available to

them by exhibiting in the show. For many exhibitors whose products are not easily

transported or are highly sophisticated and best seen in person, the ability to have a

large audience interface with the merchandise is particularly important. One exhibitor I

interviewed, whose merchandise was large, sophisticated and not easily transported,

described it best:

> I mean it is, for us, it is one thing for me to say to you over the phone or
> Skype or conference call or on a PowerPoint, I've got this really cool
> product that does all these things. It is totally different than being able to
> sit in front of it and show them and let them interface with it. It is just a

whole different product, and I think it is why people still go to the movies, right? There is something visceral about actually touching and feeling and seeing that makes people understand more. And then it is human nature that people want to do business with a person.

For the exhibitor above, the goal was to get attendees in the booth so they can engage the product—see, touch, feel— in a way that is otherwise logistically difficult to accomplish.

A firm's objectives are aligned with their production and sales cycle, as well as the resources (such as amount of booth staff) available to them at the show. For instance, a newly released product means that an exhibitor will have to spend time introducing the product to the marketplace and educating attendees on its capabilities. Brad, whose product was released four months prior to the show, was focused on:

> We're here for PR, show people it, education. Not necessarily to sell it. Our technology does not exist right now in the market, so for us, we have to teach you something. I spend more time trying to educate people than I do trying to sell them something.

Whereas exhibiting well-established products allow exhibitors to spend their time reinforcing existing relationships and showcasing and selling the product. Mark and Maggie's priorities are sales oriented:

> The first goal is sales opportunity… That's always our first goal. The second is branding… So we are unveiling our newest products and really just branding the company and continuing the momentum and continuing to showcase who we are and what we are about.

> We are there to provide demos and show our products and educate people on our products. It is ultimately to sell our products. A lot of it is developing that relationship with the customers and the people that come into the booth.

Then there are exhibitors whose products are not in the marketplace yet. Bob's goal for attending CTIA was "a little different" because they "didn't want to promote the product." They were there to determine if there was enough interest to continue investing in a product that is currently in development phase.

Prioritizing objectives and focusing interaction towards meeting those objectives does not mean that exhibitors' objectives and interactions are narrow, static and distinct. To the contrary, fluidity exists depending on people, circumstance and environment. However, to make the most of their time on the floor and to achieve the highest return on investment possible, the exhibitors knew exactly why they were there and what they wanted to accomplish while on the floor.

Arranging Meetings, Structuring Time

To take advantage of their time in the booth, the exhibitors want less spontaneity and more predictability in terms of who they will meet. Many exhibitors relied on prearranged meetings to ensure they met with the "right" attendees. Prearranged meetings are meetings that occur in the booth but are arranged before the show. The exhibitors' process of securing prearranged meetings is straightforward: the exhibitor contacts a potential or existing customer or colleague, usually via telephone, sometimes via email, to arrange a time to meet in the booth. Often these meetings are set up weeks or months prior to the show. The goal of prearranged meetings is, as one exhibitor noted, "to put it on their calendars so they have a goal when they are going to go to your booth."

80

Prearranged meetings are most common for exhibitors with the human resources available to dedicate a set period of time, usually 20 to 30 minutes, although two exhibitors I spoke with allotted up to 60 minutes, to meet an individual. Smaller firms, defined as those in 10 by 10 square foot booths with one or two people staff members present, usually did not have the manpower to devote 15 to 60 minutes to one individual, at least not on a continuous basis, nor did they have the physical space and amenities like seating to host individuals for extended period of time. The medium and large exhibitors, those with booths often larger than 10 by 10 square feet and with several staff members in attendance, often have the space and human resources to host an individual or group of individuals in short intervals of time.

As a result, prearranged meetings can significantly structure the way time an exhibitor used his time the booth. For instance, I spoke with a medium sized firm where one salesperson estimated 80 percent of his time was spent in prearranged meetings. His coworker, Maggie, estimated 60 percent of her time was spent in prearranged meetings. In fact, their firm brought an onsite administrator to track the sales staffs' meetings.

Steve, an executive level manager at a few hundred people, privately held firm, and Mark, a senior manager for a large multinational firm, shared their schedules with me. Steve said:

> Throughout the course of the day, there is pretty much a meeting every half hour. After the show, depending on the day, there is typically some sort of cocktail reception type happy hour event, then after that is usually dinner with customers. At some point you have to go to sleep. Dinner with customers usually goes late. Then you start all over again the next day.

Mark's schedule is also structured:

> From 7 to 9 in the morning, we had testing going on in the booth…since these are new products that nobody has seen before… we literally do testing in the booth before the show starts every day. Then we had a television station broadcasting live at our booth from 9 to 10 am... And then every half hour on the hour, from 10 to 4 in the afternoon, every half hour we had a media interview. It could be with trade publications, local reporters, entertainment reports, you name it… And then if my schedule is correct, we then had four customer dinners going on at night...

While the narrative of clusters includes the spontaneity of who you may meet, medium and large exhibitors are not haphazard in how they spend their time in the booth. The hours on the floor were filled with a series of prearranged meetings that last, on average, 20 to 60 minutes. These exhibitors had targeted who they wanted to meet and took the necessary steps to arrange meetings. This is not to say "collisions" do not occur; rather its recognizing time and scale. In a temporary space with 1,100 / 450 exhibitors and 40,000 / 25,000 at CTIA and G2E, respectively, it does not behoove anyone to rely on chance alone to produce business-oriented interaction.

The Time Limits of the Booth

The exhibitors can accomplish a lot while in the booth. However, the booth, much like the office, is not a boon for all business interactions. There are interactional limitations to the booth. In particular, the exhibitors I spoke with did not find the booth or tradeshow floor environment conducive to actual deal-making or the subtleties or elusive qualities of doing business such developing relationships, finding commonalities, sharing experiences or establishing trust. Sure, the booth is valuable for moving closer

to securing a deal. For example, attendees can interface with the merchandise. And yes, exhibitors can meet new people and touch base with familiar faces. But, on the whole, the subtleties of doing business requires more time than the exhibitors have while in the booth.

First, deals, particularly deals of sophisticated software and specialized merchandise, are often made in the context of a business *relationship*. The importance of making a connection with a potential or current client is often touted. However, the ability to do so often overlooked. Exhibitors are told that it *could* be done and *should* be done. But there are significant challenges to actually doing it in the booth. In the absence of prearranged meetings, many exhibitors favored "quick" "five to fifteen minutes" meetings to long drawn out conversations. Even with prearranged meeting, the exhibitors felt that conversation was limited to a discussion on products and brand. As Bob explained to me,

> … you break the ice, you can start a conversation... If there is a need, try to understand what their needs are […] What can I solve? What is keeping you up at night? […] you know when you're at a trade show there is so much time and you're looking at everyone around me trying to make sure that this is happening, can I take this and get a call to action, and move on to the next one. There is limited time here.

The objective was to obtain information that can be used to promote the brand and product. If an attendee has an interest in the product, the exhibitors collected their business cards so they could follow up and make contact after the show. This is due, in part, to the nature of the tradeshow floor. Time is extremely limited.

The subtleties of doing business such developing relationships, finding commonalities, sharing experiences, or establishing trust do not commonly unfold in

83

finite environment geared exclusively towards work. Relationships aren't necessarily developed nor trust established from shared space and face-to-face interaction alone. They require attention and a range of interaction. Developing relationships and establishing trust are social processes requiring an investment of time and attention, and an exhibitor booth is a place where time and attention are often strained.

Furthermore, the exhibitors did not engage deal-making due to the nuanced, complex nature of coming to a contractual, legally-binding agreement. This is partially due to the types of products and services exhibited by the exhibitors I spoke with at CTIA and G2E. Sophisticated software systems and specialized merchandise tend to be very costly and are sometimes considered to be a "nice to have" rather than a necessity. A purchase of an analytic software system, for instance, is not as straightforward as buying standardized merchandise such as a chair. Most of us intuitively know something about a chair—what we do with it, why we need it—and we can easily evaluate its utility, our need for it and what we are willing to pay for it. However, the purchasing decisions for non-standardized or specialized products "are a long time in the making." I was told repeatedly that the lead-to-sale cycle was an iterative process that occurs over the course of "several months" to "years." One has to develop an understanding of the product before he can evaluate its utility; this often requires a series of conversations. One wants to know about the company: are they stable and reliable? Is their product worthwhile? Further, purchasing decisions require budgetary considerations, a series of negotiations and approval from numerous parties, from lawyers who review contracts to technical teams that handle implementation.

Structured Spontaneity

The possibility of meeting someone with similar business interests seems promising at a tradeshow. In fact, that promise is a widely touted benefit of attending the event. However, I found that serendipitous and spontaneous meetings are not really serendipitous or spontaneous in nature—rather, they are structured. The exhibitors actively *plan* and *position* themselves to allow for seemingly serendipitous and spontaneities interactions with the "right" people. As outlined in the beginning of the chapter, part of this occurs by prearranging meetings with their target audience while in the booth. Some exhibitors will encourage staff to walk to floor to see how they will bump in to. However, as previously discussed, an exhibitors time in the booth or on the floor is a small portion of their time at a tradeshow. The allure of a tradeshow is more than the exhibition hall that is open from 11 am to 5 pm. Many exhibitors as well as organizers and professional organizations utilize the hours before and after the show.

Social venues such as restaurants, bars, coffee shops and golf courses, among others, are used to provide a change in atmosphere, extend the workday, and add an element of leisure to work. According to the exhibitors I spoke with, the use of social venues occurs at all tradeshows. It is organizationally and individually sanctioned part of attending the show. For example, both CTIA and G2E hosted a welcome reception, and many exhibitors attend these events as part of their job. While such events can seemingly provide the forum for serendipitous interaction (as anyone with a badge can attend), the exhibitors describe the events as "hit or miss" and "not very good" for

networking. One exhibitor told me that "most people end up talking to people they already know." Another said, "If the person I meet is in a position that has nothing to do with my immediate needs, then it probably isn't time well spent." Other exhibitors view it as an opportunity to get their name out and to invite people to visit the booth.

The exhibitors favored attending targeted events and hosting their own events as forum to get to know others. Examples of targeted events at G2E included Emerging Leaders Networking Reception, Tribal Gaming Networking Luncheon, and Global Gaming Networking Breakfast. CTIA had several targeted events as well. These events are structured in that the audience is defined and limited to a certain group of people (that hold certain ascribed or achieved positions, or segmented by market, etc.), and by participating in these events exhibitors (and attendees) position themselves to engage in "direct networking" with "right" or "targeted" people. While serendipitous and spontaneous, it's also planned and opportunistic.

In addition to participating in targeted events, exhibitors also host their own events to encourage interaction and devote time and attention to the right people. Most exhibitors host an individual or small group of individuals for drinks or dinner, while a select few can throw a party of their own. The ability to attract a large audience is exceedingly difficult because time is coveted. As Steve told me,

> We typically, we do not try to compete by hosting a function that we hope people will attend. We just take people out to dinner. When all the big guys are having functions, we can't compete with a massive budget party.

Regardless of the scale hosting is done; an opportunity is created to devote time and attention to their targeted audience.

DISCUSSION

I argue the finite existence of CTIA and G2E do not make them less significant; rather, these events and the physical space they temporarily occupy are held in higher esteem. CTIA and G2E are significant, meaningful places, even though they physically exist for only four days each year. Tradeshow organizers design the tradeshow floor for business-to-business trade audiences to exchange tangible (i.e. organizational names and products) and intangible (i.e. status and prestige) information. The tradeshow floor offers exhibitors a hyper-targeted arena to get in front of their audience, exchange information, showcase their firm and product, and engage interested parties. The exhibitors' return on investment cannot be easily replicated through other means. Thus, these events are considered to be highly valuable.

The processes that occur in these venues are significant due to the amount of information that can be obtained in a relatively short amount of time. As such, time is not viewed with whimsy and spontaneity. The exhibitors construct it as valuable, and approach it with careful planning. I found that exhibitors not only structure their time in the booth, but they also actively plan and position themselves so seemingly serendipitous and spontaneous interactions occur with the "right" people before and after the show.

As outlined in the beginning of the chapter, exhibitors structure their time by prioritizing the objectives they wish to accomplish while in the booth. Prioritizing objectives means aligning organizational goals, such as showcasing and educating people on a new product, with the interactional potential or what interactions they

87

perceive as possible given the characteristics of environment. The common objectives

exhibitors seek to accomplish while in the booth includes answering questions,

showcasing product, gauging consumer interest, collecting business cards, and meeting

people. They are product, brand and work-oriented.

In an effort to structure or reduce the randomness of who to spend time with,

many exhibitors will schedule a time to meet while in the booth. Prearranged meetings

are meetings that occur in the booth but that are arranged before the show. The

process for securing a prearranged meeting usually begins a few weeks to several

months before the show. An exhibitor will make contact with a potential or existing

customer, usually via telephone or email. Medium- and large-scale exhibitors often plan

in prearrange meetings because they have the physical space and human resources to

meet with an individual or group of individual for an interval of time, usually 20 to 60

minutes. Small-scale exhibitors generally do not have the human resources, physical

space and amenities (like seating) to host individuals for a continuous period of time.

Prioritizing objectives and prearranging meeting allows exhibitors to make the most of

their time on the floor and achieve a high return on their investment.

There are interactions that are perceived as not ideally suited for the booth. The

exhibitors I spoke with did not find the booth conducive to deal-making or developing

the subtleties of doing business such as discovering commonalities or developing

relationships. This is not to say the booth isn't valuable for moving closer to securing a

deal. It absolutely is. The booth provides attendees the opportunity to interface with the

products and salespeople in a way that is often geographically and logistically difficult to

accomplish. But a booth is not a place to engage in the nuanced complexities of establishing a legally-binding contractual agreement that often accompanies to purchase of non-standardized technology-based products. These purchases often requires input from upper management who deal with budgetary constraints, technical teams to handle implementation, lawyers who review terms and contracts.

Further, I am not suggesting networking or meeting people does not occur on the floor or in the booth. It does. However, we must put the concept of networking into context (which I will do in-depth in Chapter 6). The interactions that occur on the floor are often structured, work-oriented and relatively quick. Prearranged meetings generally last between 20 to 60 minutes. Otherwise the exhibitors I spoke with tend to engage in "quick" five to ten minutes discussion instead of long lingering conversations. Developing relationships, discovering commonalities, sharing experiences, and establishing trust are social processes that require an investment of time and attention. An exhibitor booth is a space where time and attention are often strained.

The allure of a tradeshow is more than the exhibition hall that is open from 11 am to 5 pm. Many exhibitors as well as organizers and professional organizations utilize the hours before and after the show. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, afterhours venues offer a space where time and attention are less constrained. Social venues such as restaurants, bars, coffee shops and golf courses, among others, are used to provide a change in atmosphere, extend the workday, and add an element of leisure to work. According to the exhibitors I spoke with, the use of social venues occurs at all tradeshows. It is organizationally and individually sanctioned part of attending the show.

However, I found that serendipitous and spontaneous meetings are not really serendipitous or spontaneous in nature. They are structured. The exhibitors actively *plan* and *position* themselves to allow for seemingly serendipitous and spontaneities interactions with the "right" people. The exhibitors favored attending targeted events and hosting their own events as forum to get to know others. These events are structured in that the audience is defined and limited to a certain group of people (i.e. that hold certain ascribed or achieved positions, or segmented by market), and by participating in these events exhibitors (and attendees) position themselves to engage in "direct networking" with "right" or "targeted" people. While serendipitous and spontaneous, it's also planned and opportunistic.

In addition to participating in targeted events, exhibitors also host their own events to encourage interaction and devote time and attention to the right people. Most exhibitors host an individual or small group of individuals for drinks or dinner, while a select few can throw a party of their own. Regardless of the scale, hosting is an opportunity is created to devote time and attention to their targeted audience.

CHAPTER 5

MOVING BEYOND "BEING THERE": STRATEGIES FOR "BEING NOTICED"

This chapter examines exhibitors' relationship with the characteristics of place and their ability to be noticed. Previous research such as Gertler (1995) and Power and Jannson (2008) have devoted significant attention to "being there" or a concept denoting the intangible byproduct of sharing geographic proximity with likeminded people. In the case of a tradeshow, anyone participating will acquire industry knowledge on trends, ideas, information and opportunities just by walking the floor, talking to exhibitors, listening to keynotes, reading distributed materials, watching stage presentations, and listening and engaging in the chatter taking place in aisles and reception areas. Access to this knowledge is spontaneous; however it dissipates when one is not present at the site. This research can further support the notion that being there is significant.

But "being there" is only part of the story in understanding temporary gathering places such as tradeshows. As this research reveals, simply being there is not enough for tradeshow exhibitors. In this chapter, I discuss a firm's potential for visibility or "being noticed." While being there accounts for the acquisition of knowledge, being noticed accounts for the advantages from standing out. Thus being noticed is a concept that denotes being there *and* actively garnering and benefiting from the attention of the people at the gathering place. In the section that follows, I describe in detail the physical site characteristics of CTIA and G2E and then document how exhibitors actively garner

91

the attention of the attendees on the tradeshow floor, including the use of strategies

such as selecting booth space, notifying potential and existing customers of

participation in the show, and in-booth marketing. I close the chapter with a discussion

on how "being noticed" shapes exhibitors' interactional patterns on and off the floor.

Description of the Tradeshow Floor

I arrived at the Sands Expo and Convention Center in May 2013 for CTIA and in

September 2013 for G2E. Each time I retrieved my credentials from registration and

quickly made my way to the exhibition hall entrance, I was immediately struck by the

size of the event, which commanded as much space as several football fields put

together.

At CTIA, over 1,100 exhibition booths occupied 325,000 square feet. The

exhibitor booths were grouped into 27 categories that were collapsed into four broad

zones: Retail; E-Tech; Wireless Innovations from Around the Globe; and Featured

Technology Innovations. Positioned to the far right side of the exhibition hall were the

CTIA World Buzz Zone and Emerging Technology Showcase stages, Exhibitors

Innovations stage and iZone Innovations stage. Signs listing booth numbers and zone

information hung from the ceiling. I stood as men and women dressed in black, blue and

gray business suits zipped by me with purpose. A few men bucked the norm in favor of

pullover collared shirt, a pair of slacks and walking shoes. Some women traded in their

high heels for flats. People gathered at the perimeter of the exhibition hall chatting on

cell phones and typing on laptops. Over three days nearly 40,000 professionals attended

CTIA (http://www.ctia.org).

Figure 7 CTIA Tradeshow Floor

Photo Source: GPS World (http://gpsworld.com/event/ctia-2013/)

At G2E, 450 exhibition booths occupied 285,000 square feet. Positioned to the

right of the exhibition floor were three small zones— iGaming; Food, Beverage and

Hospitality; and Security and Surveillance. These zones accounted for a small number of

the total booths. The remainder of the floor was organized by booth size. To the far left

side of the exhibition hall, large booths mimicked miniature casinos. Bright flashy

screens hung from the ceiling. Groups of people crowded around merchandise with

blinking lights. The sound of fun filled the area. Lounges dedicated to specific

populations such as Table Games Lounge, Latin American Gaming Lounge, NIGA Lounge,

and Regulators Lounge were scattered throughout. Signs of Las Vegas streets such as Las

Vegas Boulevard and Tropicana Avenue hung from the ceiling to guide attendees. One

had to cross reference the street names with the tradeshow map given to you upon

entrance. People congregated in isles, shaking hands, introducing themselves,

exchanging business cards and saying hello to each other. More than 25,000 gaming

professionals attended G2E over three days (http://www.globalgamingexpo.com/Fact

Sheet).

Figure 8 G2E Tradeshow Floor

Photo Source: Vegas Chatter (http://www.vegaschatter.com/tag/Sands%20Expo%20Center)

The vast physical space requires a physical endurance that rarely went unnoticed

in my interviews and in casual conversations with exhibitors. The layout of the floor is

such that exhibition booths lined up next to each other to form long rows that produce

a rough grid (see maps in Appendix C and D). The booths ranged in size from an

unassuming 10 x 10 square feet to an impressive and less common 100 x 100 square

feet. Conversations mentioning the space were almost as common as pleasantries such

as 'how are you?' and 'are you enjoying the show?' The attention the exhibitors paid to

the physical endurance required to navigate the large space may be due, in part, that I

was seven months pregnant at CTIA and seven weeks postpartum at G2E. Commenting

on the physicality required to navigate the space (for example, "how are your feet

holding up?" and "you must be tired.") may have been an easy way to generate

conversation with me. In fact, one exhibitor said as much. However, nearly half of my

interviews took place via telephone; thus the visual cue to discuss how I was doing or to

ask others how they were doing was not always present. Even then, it still came up

throughout the course of our conversation more times than not.

Walking the tradeshow floor, however benign as it may sound, was an

exhaustive undertaking. It can take a full day, even two or three, to get through.

Attendees spend hours talking, standing and walking the floor. For example, I spoke

with Mac, a high level gaming executive whose job is to make purchases on behalf of

several properties. He spends "a minimum" of two hour just preparing for the show.

"When I get the list of all the vendors that are going to be there, then I access my needs

for my departments and then I try to decide how the building is laid out, how it is easier

for me to walk around. It is a lot of walking." He continued, "For me personally, I go two

to three full days. I will spend at least a minimum of ten hours, sometimes 13 hours."

The exhibitors acknowledged the attendees' physicality involved in navigating the space

with passing comments like "It's a long three days for them, too" and "It's tiring for everyone."

Even reaching the exhibition hall from the parking structure required a solid ten minute walk, and that's without factoring in time for getting lost, which is completely plausible. More than once, I was approached by someone who asked if I knew where I was going and if he or she could follow me. (We were able to identify each other through our tradeshow badges.) The closer I got to the entrance dyads and triads became groups of eight, ten or larger as people gathered together to walk towards the tradeshow floor.

Once inside the exhibition hall, there is very little seating, with the exception of a café-style seating area near the restrooms and food counter. Save for the largest exhibitors, most do not have seating in their booths due to lack of space and financial resources, as larger spaces cost more and exhibitors are responsible for paying for absolutely everything in the booth including carpet, chairs, table, signs and so forth. The seating located outside the entrance and in the downstairs lobby nearest the taxi line was overrun with people. It was great for me, as a researcher, because the lack of seating opened the door for informal conversations. Questions like "may I sit down?" or "is this seat taken?" and comments like "wow, there's so many people here" turned into "how are you enjoying the show?" and "why do you attend?"

Not only is there is physicality to navigating the floor, but to exhibiting as well. On the tradeshow floor, exhibitors are expected to appear friendly and knowledgeable. They spend hours standing, smiling, reciting product pitches and answering questions. I

met Jake, an exhibitor with ten years in the industry, on the third day of G2E. I stopped

by his medium sized booth that had a display of standardized merchandise along with a

demonstration area showcasing software. He lives in Las Vegas. We decided to meet the

following week for coffee. I asked him about his experience at the show. He said he was

"still recovering":

> Your feet hurt and your back hurts. You can be in the best shape of your
> whole life and your back is still going to hurt, your feet are still going to
> hurt. I literally hit a wall. I didn't know left from right.

Jake's co-worker, Maggie, who was sitting on the other side of me, nodded in

agreement. She added, "By day three you don't want to walk anymore. You just want to

sit down." Jake and Maggie were not the only exhibitors who felt depleted.

Brad was exhibiting a computer program that was recently released to the

marketplace. He explained to me that his firm's purpose for attending the show was to

generate interest in their product. The company is less than two years old and the

program was released to the public just four months ago. He, a director, and his co-

worker, the CEO, were attending CTIA for the first time. The CEO left town early

Thursday morning, just a few hours before the show ended. As Brad put it, he is "old"

and the tradeshow "wore him out." With only a few hours left of the show, Brad's

energy had fizzled. He noted that "… by day three you are just burned out. Day four, day

five, whatever it is, you are just burned out. I don't know anyone that leaves feeling well

rested." Brad spent the last hour and a half of the show sitting in a chair, chatting with

me. He offered me a place to sit after he remarked that my feet had to be swollen from

walking around.

As I sat in the booth next to Brad, I had a different view of the floor. I saw the floor from the exhibitor's perspective. Brad and countless others sat in booths that were lined up next to and across from each other, while hundreds of people walked by. Some stop to talk, others did not. As I sat there, I began to wonder if the attendees are really seeing the exhibitors. How does a firm stand out among its peers in such a large area? How does a crowded space shape the exhibitors potential for visibility? How does visibility impact their interactional potential?

The Advantages of Being Noticed

Being noticed or standing out among peers is paramount for exhibitors. A tradeshow is a beneficial environment for exhibitors (and attendees) because it offers an opportunity structure to those with similar business interests to get together and discuss. Thus, in lieu of physically traveling from to one location after another to interface with potential and existing customers and colleagues, which is expensive and time consuming, the exhibitors ship their merchandise, get themselves on an airplane, and arrive at a tradeshow where thousands of people with like interests convene. The advantages to exhibitors are that they can meet more people and these people can interact with the firm's product with greater ease. But these advantages are only achieved if the potential or existing customer makes it to the booth. In this regard, most exhibitors actively employ strategies to enhance their presence on the floor and increase the flow of traffic to the booth. These strategies of being noticed include selecting booth space, notifying potential and existing customers of participation in the

show, and in-booth marketing. They are used to draw attention to the booth in an environment where it is easy to be overlooked.

Strategies to Enhance Visibility on the Floor

How companies advertise themselves at a tradeshow is different than how they advertise themselves in the marketplace, in part, because of the large competitive environment. When I asked the exhibitors what the large physical space and layout of booths meant to them, they recognized that it produces the real possibility of booths "going unnoticed" and entire rows "left unseen." For example, Maggie, an exhibitor at G2E, said she "frequently" hears from clients after the show, "oh, I didn't know where you were at!" She sighed and then threw her hands in the air with a look of frustration.

Exhibiting firms put forth a significant amount of effort in order to be noticed. Mark's firm, for instance, spends a full year planning for and several million dollars on one tradeshow. He told me about the process:

> How you do it [in everyday marketplace] is you are available, you are sincere, and you are authentic. In some ways I think you can set yourself apart by being humble. But as far as [long pause] you know we talk about that every year. How do we make the booth bigger and better than last year? I mean I don't know what you do at this point. In general, you differentiate yourself through your products and you believe in those products. That is what we do. To differentiate yourself at a place like a tradeshow, each year it seems to get crazier. I mean I don't know what we can do at this point.

The question of how to get people to notice you (an exhibitor) on the floor are an important one, and being noticed is not taken for granted.

Mark and Maggie's response to hearing that existing or potential customers did not come by the booth is not a kneejerk reaction. Constructing an exhibit requires a

significant amount of a firm's time, energy, and human and financial resources.

Exhibitors, including Maggie and Mark, commonly spend six months or longer preparing

for a show. They put considerable thought into everything from booth design to

marketing materials to contacting potential and current customers. They also spend a

significant amount of money to exhibit. The exhibitors rely on time spent in the booth to

fulfill a multitude of functions that all lead back to the reason they are in business—to

generate sales. They seek to take advantage of the opportunity of having their target

audience and their merchandise in the same place for a dedicated period of time.

Selecting booth space

The exhibitors' strategically select where their booth is positioned on the

tradeshow floor to increase being noticed. The selection of booth space is important

because it impacts physical accessibility (how easily someone can walk to the booth

from the entrance) and visibility (how easily someone can see the booth from main

corridors). Thus, not all positions on the floor are equal. Some positions are better and

more desirable than others. For instance, being positioned near a major isle or front

entrance is considered desirable because of ease in accessibility and high visibility, while

being positioned near the far back wall or behind an obstruction (like a pole) is less

desirable due to low accessibility and visibility. An exhibitor's consideration of booth

position includes the size of a booth he needs and how much he is willing to spend (the

larger the booth, the more it costs), the availability of space which is largely impacted by

when an exhibitor secures a spot (desirable locations fill up quickly) and the layout of the floor including dedicated "zones" and "pavilions".

Notifying potential and existing customers and colleagues before the show

The exhibitors engage in the process of directly and indirectly notifying potential and existing customers and colleagues of their participation in the show. In the gaming and mobile industry, many exhibitors already know who their potential customers are. To not make contact with them or to not have them come to the booth during the show is a costly missed opportunity. Notifying potential and existing customers and colleagues is a way to "get their attention" and "signifies interest" in meeting in a booth to discuss business and working together. The process of directly notifying potential and existing customers and colleagues begins "a few weeks" to "several months" out from the event, depending on the firm, and is straightforward. The exhibitors I spoke with consider it an "iterative process" of "multiple touches" which included making a series of telephone calls to touch base, following up via email, sending reminders and invitations through postal mail, and using social media to dispense booth information such as booth number and location. The process of indirectly notifying potential and existing customers and colleagues of their participation in the tradeshow includes the use of widely distributed press releases and generic email blast to "tee up their interest" and send the message: "We are here. We want to see you. Stop by the booth. This is our booth number."

Notifying potential and existing customers and colleagues during the show

The exhibitors use conspicuously placed advertisements and sponsorships, social media and mainstream press to notify potential and existing customers and colleagues of their participation in the show. Conspicuously placed advertisements opportunities are everywhere—on the tradeshow floor badge an attendee wears around his neck and on the map of the floor he holds and on the signs promoting events and keynotes. Then there are sponsorship opportunities. CTIA hosted a reception for anyone with a tradeshow badge, as did G2E. There are keynotes and other smaller events throughout the show each offering firms the opportunity to showcase their brand. Advertisements and sponsorships are not cheap, ranging from a few thousand to thirty thousand dollars. The cheaper way to gain widespread exposure is through the mainstream media; however this is an exclusive option open to very few. Mark shared the benefits to this:

> … We found to be really helpful because people just wake up in the morning to get ready to go to the show and they naturally throw on the TV. It's pretty cool if they are seeing; hey, look at our new [product redacted].

The exhibitors view having their firm's name listed as a sponsor is a "pure branding opportunity" to "get your name in front of everyone." The use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Linked In are cost effective forums exhibitors used to announce their participation and hype up their products and services.

In-booth marketing

The exhibitors use their booth as a forum to showcase their products and brand. Booths are also symbolic places to showcase innovation, industry prestige and to create

distinction between them and their competitors for shareholders, mainstream and industry media and attendees. Whilst most firms do not have the financial resources to hire celebrities or dance revues, as some have done in the past, many firms do employ some type of in-booth marketing to garner attention and draw people to the booth.

There are exhibitors like Mark who have the financial and human resources to create elaborate booths. At G2E, large-scale exhibitors erected two-story mega booths equipped with private meeting rooms, lounge and coffee/bar areas, and a flurry of casino games. I stood in the crowds to catch a glimpse of featured celebrities such as David Copperfield and animated characters from Avatar. I waved hello to Las Vegas showgirls. I smiled at shirtless guys with large biceps dressed as superheroes.

Figure 9 Bat Mobile Used as a Prop in an Exhibitor's Booth at G2E

Photo Source: lasvegasdaze.com (http://www.lasvegasdaze.com/2013/10/g2e-trip-report-fun-at-global-gaming.html)

I even took a couple pictures for attendees posing in front of the Bat Mobile (yes—there

was an automobile in the booth) from the famed 1960s television show Batman.

As if celebrity meet and greets are not enough to attract attendees, most large-

and small-scale exhibitors distributed free goods ranging from small trinkets to clothing.

I met a middle aged gentleman named Jeff while walking the floor at G2E. He stood in

the back of his company's large, busy booth. I asked him about the crowd lining up for

free t-shirts. Jeff's firm flew six people from a boutique t-shirt shop located in the

Midwest to Las Vegas for the sole purpose of creating hand painted custom t-shirts for

G2E attendees. I stood in line for over 30 minutes to reach the counter where I designed

my own t-shirt that had a somewhat subtle company logo masked in a bright cartoonish

graphic design. Jeff agreed that people were excited about the t-shirts. I was excited

about the t-shirt. They offered a range of sizes. Unlike the stiff unshapely shirts that are

usually distributed for free, these were made from plush soft cotton. He disclosed that

his firm had to change marketing directions from the year prior when they had hired a

disc jockey to play loud music in the booth for several hours to create a party-like

atmosphere. Jeff noted, "We really pissed off the people [vendors] around us."

At G2E, I collected free pens, pads of paper, reusable bags, t-shirts, drinks and

snacks such as petite box of chocolates, packages of cookies and popcorn, and a lunch

pail filled with treats they selected from a dessert bar.

The attendees' at CTIA had an appetite for elaborate displays and free goods as

well. I spun a Wheel of Fortune type wheel to try to win an Ipad. (I didn't.) Similar to

G2E, I collected free pens, pads of paper, reusable bags, a keychain, and even a

miniature bag of curry from a company paying homage to their Indian business ties. Some firms even have of "booth babes" as they are affectionately called or conventionally attractive men and women who are hired to chat with attendees and pass out flyers and other promotional trinkets.

The goal of these marketing tactics is to get people to the booth and to receive name recognition. Free goods have proven to be popular draw for a booth that may otherwise go unnoticed. The hope is that once inside, exhibitors can spark consumer interest, showcase new merchandise, meet new contacts, educate attendees on products/services, collect business cards, establish leads, solve problems, set up follow-up meetings, and sell products/services. And even if an attendee is not looking for a particular product or service now, they may in the future. Exhibitors hope their displays and marketing goodies are memorable.

Of course I also observed booths that I felt lacked promotional pizzazz. Brad's company, for example, opted out of the elaborate marketing ploys in favor of creating an "interesting" circular glass display sat in front of us atop a foldout table that was covered with a white linen-like tablecloth. He went on to describe the display dutifully: "It's different. It pops out. It's a great paperweight. I don't know what I'd use it for at home but it is great here." Next to the display sat a black laptop computer that was used to demonstrate the product. A vinyl sign with the company logo and name hung behind us.

Brad's booth mirrored countless others at the show; modest and unremarkable at first glance. In addition to Brad, I spoke with other exhibitors who felt their marketing

ploys and signs and designs were interesting and intriguing. (I disagree.) I only spoke

with one exhibitor who said he wasn't exhibiting to market his firm. Rob's business was

"small" and he valued "quality over quantity." He said attending the show was about

being part of the industry rather than standing out in the industry. For him, being there

was more important than being noticed. For the other exhibitors I spoke with, being

noticed was *as* important as being there.

Even though Brad's firm opted out of distributing goodies, he understands the

value of promotional items. He elaborated:

> Tradeshows aren't really about the product. I mean people will read
> about it. They will say, 'Oh I like UL,' whatever UL stands for. They will
> come see it. That's going to be one out of every ten people that stop by.
> The other nine go, 'oh a free pen' or 'there's a pretty girl handing out
> flyers.' It's the marketing aspect and getting people to come see you and
> that's where you generate leads. […] There are modeling agencies that
> hire girls or guys or whoever it may be to come out and serve alcohol or
> talk to people. They do that because it draws attention. It is just the way
> it works. It draws attention to that group.

I spoke with a few exhibitors who acknowledged that they did not have the resources

for elaborate marketing materials, although very few said they did not see the value of

these materials in a tradeshow environment.

Being noticed on the tradeshow floor is incredibly difficult. Thus exhibitors

employ strategies to stand out amongst the crowd, such as selecting certain booth

space, notifying potential and existing customer before and during the show and

participating in in-booth marketing. In addition, many exhibitors change physical

location—move from the tradeshow floor to social venues—to stand out.

DISCUSSION

Previous research on clusters and temporary clusters has paid particular

attention to the concept of "being there" or an individual's access to critical

information, new ideas and opportunities that arise from shared geography with

likeminded people (Gertler 1995; Power and Jannson 2008). Researchers have found

that access to knowledge and opportunities dissipate when one is not present at the

site. This research acknowledges and echoes the importance of being there, as

exhibitors and attendees alike glean a lot of information in a short amount of time, by

simply walking the tradeshow floor or attending a panel.

Yet, there is a glaring omission from the research, particularly on tradeshows as

temporary clusters. In this environment, in the capacity of an exhibitor, being there is

often not enough to make them return year after year. Participating in a tradeshow as

an exhibitor is a hefty expense, ranging from a few thousand to millions of dollars. In

fact, it is often the most costly "event" budget items for a firm. To evaluate the value of

participation in the event, most rely on some calculation of return on investment—

which is measured and conceptualized in a myriad of ways. It generally consists of some

evaluation of "leads" or "sales" generated. (The merits of the right, best, most useful or

innovative way to measure return on investment is beyond the scope of this research.)

It is clear from my formal and informal conversations with exhibitors, simply being there

was not enough. Exhibitors don't want to just receive information; they want to meet

with people face-to-face and dispense it. Take a look around the tradeshow floor and it

becomes apparent that firms spend a significant amount of time and money towards

being noticed. I defined "being noticed" as not only the benefits of being there but also the benefits of actively garnering the attention of the people at the gathering place.

Throughout this chapter, I discuss tactics of being noticed. To stand out from the crowd, exhibitors employed several strategies to garner attention which ranged from predictable (i.e. handing out a flyer with company information) to outrageous (i.e. hiring David Copperfield to sit in the booth). Exhibitors carefully select their booth space with physical accessibility (how easily someone can walk to the booth from the entrance) and visibility (how easily someone can see the booth from main corridors) in mind. Exhibitors spend weeks and even months reaching out to existing and perspective clients to notify them of their participation in the show. Once at the show, exhibitors rely on advertising and sponsorship opportunities to feature their firm. Indeed, firms' logos are conspicuously printed on everything from signage to attendees' name badges. Social media and mainstream press also have a stronghold in announcing the firms' participation. Lastly, firm rely on elaborate and sometimes outrageous marketing tactics that are intermingled with product information, pitches and demonstrations. Pads of paper, pens, food, even t-shirts are distributed along with business cards and informational brochures.

It is easy to unnoticed in an environment of 1,100 / 450 exhibitors and 40,000 / 25,000 attendees (CTIA and G2E, respectively), especially with so many clamoring to be seen. But the advantages of being noticed are numerous and the stakes are too high to leave to chance— it's about garnering attention for the brand and product. It's about taking advantaged of shared geography by speaking with people face-to-face. It's about

having an audience and letting them interface with the merchandise. Regardless of a

firm's size, prestige, or time in the industry, when asked to describe the floor, exhibitors

commonly depicted the floor in a consistent way, as "crowded", "loud", "noisy",

"tiring", "fun" and even "chaotic." The tradeshow is a unique environment where a

global industry is condensed to a single place. There are certainly benefits to being at

CTIA and G2E, and many of these advantages stem from being noticed.

CHAPTER 6:

THE PROCESS OF DOING BUSINESS IN SOCIAL VENUES

CTIA and G2E are one part merchandise, meetings and eager salespeople, and another part bright lights, models, superheroes, and free goods. The floor is undoubtedly product, brand and work-oriented, fast-paced social place, particularly when compared to the humdrum office buildings in which many of us work. In previous chapters, I have outlined the meaning of the tradeshow floor and use of time at the temporary event, and I have provided a vivid description of the floor and examined how to stand out on it. This chapter focuses on social venues.

Social venues such as restaurants, bars, coffee shops and golf courses often possess similar characteristics to one another. This is not to say that these places all possess the same physical characteristics, atmosphere or meaning. The restaurant where someone secured a ten million deal will certainly hold more significance than one where no deal was made at all. A small intimate bistro possesses different features from a large sports bar featuring Monday Night Football. However, in general, the exhibitors did not have a preference for one place over another when deciding where to meet a colleague. The exhibitors selected social venues based on convenience, such as the venue's location to the tradeshow floor/reception hall/or other formal gathering places or hotel or what they thought their guest would enjoy. Indeed, several salespeople, in particular, felt it is part of their job to know their colleagues preferences. Would he rather spend several hours dinning at a steakhouse or playing golf? Perhaps he would be

more receptive to get together for a quick coffee or a drink at a sports bar? Thus, in this sense, the exhibitors viewed social venues as an aggregate or a collection of places that serve as spaces to meet before and after tradeshow floor hours. Social venues are interchangeable and can be aligned with convenience to other locations and customers/colleagues preferences. I classify social venues as an aggregate of leisure places that are used for the purpose of enjoyment, work and a mixture of both.

I begin the chapter with a caveat dedicated to the exhibitors who do not entertain as part of their business repertoire. Next I compare and contrast the interactional potential of tradeshow show floor with social venues. In this section I focus on three subthemes: the structure of meeting in the two environs, the expectation of time in the two environs, and the atmosphere of the two environs. Then I provide an in-depth examination of "doing" business, or the actions associated with conducting business in social venues. This includes characterizing relationships as well as discussing the benefits of being "friends."

A Caveat

Of course I spoke with exhibitors who used social venues for leisure purposes only and did not entertain potential or existing clients. Their rationales for "why not" varied. Some cited not having management support and scarcity of financial resources, while others felt that they could accomplish their objectives in the booth and that developing relationships was not an important element in selling their product or service, particularly in the sale of routine, standardized merchandise. I spoke with small

firms who had an interest in entertaining but lacked the ability to compete with large

firms and other tradeshow events in securing an attendee's time afterhours.

Further, there seemed to be a difference in who valued executive hospitality. No

sales, marketing or public relations professionals that I spoke with felt that meeting

afterhours was a frivolous use of time or money—however, several conveyed

management, "the financial guys" or "the engineers" felt that way. Regardless of

whether entertaining was an acceptable business practice, every firm I spoke with, both

in interviews and in casual conversation, said they would meet an attendee afterhours,

if requested.

The remainder of the chapter focuses exclusively on the exhibitors that

entertained potential and existing clients in social venues afterhours as a form a

"doing" business. I define "doing" business as the actions associated with conducting

business, which is commonly thought of as engaging the sales process and the routine

mechanics of deal-making such as negotiating a contract or details of a purchase. In this

section, I focus on the *process of doing business in social venues* by analyzing the

subtleties involved in developing business relationship. This chapter provides an in-

depth analysis of and contains excerpts from exhibitors who routinely entertain in social

venues as part of doing business at tradeshows.

Compare and Contrast: The Tradeshow Floor and Social Venues

Social venues are not inherently workplaces. In fact, gathering spaces dedicated

to leisure activities is a more apt description. Pursuits of pleasure such as sitting, eating,

drinking, talking, watching sports, listening music and other viewing entertainment, or even playing sports (from golf to pool) are commonplace. Social venues possess a structure, an expected use of time, and an atmosphere that is different from the tradeshow floor and shapes interaction potential. This section examines these contrast, as well as any similarities that exist. It is worth noting, the exhibitors discussed the attributes they assign to social venues with greater ease when comparing and contrasting them to the tradeshow floor.

The Structure of Meeting in Two Environs

Social venues are structured differently than the tradeshow floor. The intended use and expectations of meeting in a restaurant is not for an attendee to move from table to table speaking to anyone that peaks their interests, as they would if they were on the tradeshow floor. Nor are exhibitors passive bystanders waiting to be approached. Instead, an exhibitor and existing/potential customer mutually agree to meet in order to spend "uninterrupted time" with one another. As is often the case, exhibitors select who to share a table or participate in a golf foursome, and they decide how many people to encounter at a time. Gatherings in social venue generally consist of dyads, triads and groups of four to six. Smaller, more "intimate" meetings were viewed as more desirable than hosting large parties.

On the floor and in the booth, an exhibitor has much less control over the dynamics of meeting. They cannot control who or the amount people that enter the booth. It can be an endless stream of people weaving in and out. Privacy is limited (unless you are one of the very few exhibitors that build a private meeting space into

the booth). As discussed in chapter four, the exhibitors try to structure their time in the

booth by prearranging meetings with target audience. Nonetheless, there are still

"distractions."

Expectations of Time in Two Environs

The expected use of time differs in social venues. While the booth is constructed

as a product, brand and work-oriented space, social venues are constructed as a

complementary space where work is mixed with pursuits of pleasure. They are not only

work-oriented but also leisure- and relationship-oriented spaces. The purpose for

meeting in social venues is to fulfill workplace objectives such as establishing an interest

and outlying the expectations and details of working together, as well as the subtleties

of doing business. The subtleties or intricacies of doing business are much harder to

capture than tangible business goals, but are arguably just as important to success. The

subtleties of doing business such as developing relationships, sharing experiences,

discovering commonalities, and establishing trust, are fostered by "having fun,"

"meeting face-to-face" and "spending time" with one another.

The tradeshow floor is fast-paced, time constrained place due to its exceedingly

finite nature. Exhibitors prioritize objectives and arrange meetings in an effort to speak

with as many of the people in their target audience as possible the course of three days.

They employ strategies to get noticed. As one exhibitor described it,

> Everybody's very uptight and focused on their product. They spent
> money to be in the area and they want to get a return on their
> investment. So everybody is focused.

They want to get people into the booth to interface with the merchandise and meet

company representatives face-to-face. Conversations generally last anywhere from two

to twenty minutes, with large- and medium-scale exhibitor often arranging meetings

that last thirty to sixty minutes. The pace of conversation was described as "quick" or

"rapid." Some exhibitors felt as though they were being "pulled by six or seven people

at once." Jeff elaborated,

> Because here, again, it cost a lot of money to come to these things,
> you're trying to solve a problem and take that commitment to the next
> level, setting up a meeting.

He continued,

> I'm looking at everyone around me trying to make sure that this
> happening, can I take this and get a call to action, and move on to the
> next one. There is limited time here.

Jeff's experience was similar to the vast majority of the exhibitors I spoke with; the

content of conversation is hyper-focused on product, brand and work. They are working

towards the next step in the business-sales process.

On the other hand, the exhibitors I spoke with described fluidity to conversing in

social venues. Business conversations are weaved in and out of pursuits of pleasure,

socializing and leisure. For example, Jake elaborated on the ways conversations unfold

in social venues:

> You are going to be with them for 4, 5, 6 hours, you don't want to
> onerous, at least in my opinion. We usually start out kind of slow. Then
> I'll throw out something to lead them in. If they want to play in terms of
> talking about business then we'll talk business. We usually talk about
> family, vacation, how are you doing, how is the wife and kids, and get to
> know them.

Many exhibitors echoed Jake's sentiments. I was told by one exhibitor that everyone's

relationship is "dependent upon work" and that "it will come up naturally." Another

said,

> You do it [discuss work] a little more conversational as oppose to with a
> contract. You're building relationships but you're still talking business.

Jake and others point to the unwritten rules of conversation in social venues: let it

unfold over time rather than overtly directing it. One wants to avoid being "onerous."

The expected use of time is to sit back and enjoy a moment together, and to get to

know one another before jumping into the nuances of work.

The Atmosphere of Two Environs

The atmosphere of the tradeshow floor and social venues may be described in

similar ways, depending on who you ask. Both can be labeled as "loud," "crowded" and

"fun." Although the similar language was used, the exhibitors' perception what you

could do in these "loud" and "fun" environments was very different. In this regards, I

use atmosphere to denote the mood of the environment and how that ties in to

perception of what is perceived as possible in the environment.

I read many instances and heard some exhibitors loosely say the tradeshow floor

is a space to develop relationships. Not only did I ask the exhibitors how they

conceptualize the phrase "develop relationships" (which I will discuss later in the

chapter), but some of my questions required them to think about the different spaces at

a show and what happens in each space. In this context, I heard repeatedly that

relationships development really occurs off the floor. For instance, CTIA exhibitors said:

From my personal experience and the experience of the companies that I've worked for, you get the relationship development outside of the booth. That's why I am a big proponent of client dinners.

Dinner out is fine tuning what you do here [in the booth]. We can talk more business, we can talk numbers, we can talk what we expect, what he expects. You know, we can build a relationship and then we can go from there.

G2E exhibitors made a similar observation:

As far as relationship building, I would say the majority of it is happening away from the booth, for sure. The booth is the necessary evil.

You are getting people away from the tradeshow floor. Getting them in a more private environment can lead to more productive conversations and it's also about building those relationships. You are building trust with your customers. You're building that relationship that people are going to remember our sales guys.

Compared to the tradeshow floor, social venues are more conducive to developing relationships.

Why is this? There is, for us in the United States, an intuitive understanding of how we think about work and leisure. In general, Americans do not find work to be relaxing. Leisure, on the other hand, is. When an exhibitor mixes the two, it changes the context of work. While exhibitors acknowledge that the dinners and mixers are part of their work, it is "much more relaxed." An exhibitor from G2E explained:

It [social venues] is less of a business environment and more of a social environment… I think it's just the fact that it is a social situation and you are supposed to be there to *relax* and *have a good time*.

The exhibitors at CTIA made similar statements:

You're more *relaxed*. Quite often, you know when you're at a tradeshow there is so much going on… When you go to the other one [social venues] you've got their undivided attention and that's a very big difference.

On the tradeshow floor you are dealing with people face-to-face for the first time and first impressions matter. At that point [when meeting in social venues] you can *relax*, so it's more of a business conversation versus a sell yourself conversation.

I pressed the exhibitors to define what they meant when they used some form of the word relaxed. I discovered it is a catch all word meant to characterize the atmosphere of an environment, how one feels when in the environment, and the nature of their interactions take occur in the environment.

Moreover, being in a relaxing environment or being relaxed means is to be in a physical or mental space where work is de-emphasized as a topic of conversation and leisure activities such as eating and drinking are prominent. This is not to say work is not discussed or the purpose of meeting is not work-oriented. To the contrary, but it is to say that business conversations unfold differently in social venues than they do on the tradeshow floor. Business intertwines with personal conversation. For example, the exhibitors below how and why they retrieve an individual's personal information:

It's like golf, that's a perfect example. You may not be a great golfer but you have four hours of face-to-face time with somebody. When can you do that? In the social mediated world you cannot do that. Being able to talk and expand that relationship, being able to find common interests, and from there, quite often you start out trying to solve a one problem and then as you start understanding what his issues are and you can help solve a much bigger problem. (Exhibitor, CTIA)

There is some [talk of] business but it is mostly [developing] trust. They are trying to get to know me as I am trying to get to know them. Part of my sale is to understand how my product can affect their personal lives so they can have more free time or more time with their family. I need to know what interests them outside of work and what will make their work life a lot better too. I need to know how to marry that product with both. (Exhibitor, G2E)

The personal information obtained throughout the course of participating in a leisure

activity can be and is used for business purposes. Specifically, the exhibitors use the

information as a way to connect their product or service in a way that will resonate with

an individual, to alleviate problems or free up time.

Being in a relaxed environment or feeling relaxed while working has real

implications that advantage business. Social venues are places where guards are down

and the flow of information is high that is not otherwise shared. For example, George, a

thirty year veteran in the gaming industry said,

> I think people's guards are down… It is true. I know it's true because
> people have even commented on it. People that know me or might be
> there with me, they're like 'I can't believe you said that to that person.
> Why did you share that?' I said, 'I don't know. I think it will help that
> person' whereas elsewhere I might be more of a listener and less of a
> share-er.'… I think people behave differently.

CTIA exhibitors shared similar experiences:

> Personally, my best times to get information from clients have been
> when they have a few drinks. They are more open to, and obviously I just
> don't go straight into it, I already have an established relationship with
> them, but that's when I get my information.

> You are paying to bill so they are a little more apt to open up to you and
> share with you.

The exhibitors' experiences in social venues highlight the differences between the

tradeshow floor and social venues. Social venues are valuable because relaxation is

viewed as an asset. As a result of this asset, people are more relaxed, their guards are

down, and information is more freely shared.

Characterizing Relationships

The nuances of developing relationships are, as I've alluded to in subsequent chapters, sharing experiences and personal information, discovering commonalities, and establishing trust. These subtleties occur when spending face-to-face time and enjoying one's company. It is in this context that the way exhibitors view their relationships change. When speaking to the exhibitors about who they meet on the floor, they commonly used prescribe terms to discuss their relations. Words like "clients," "potential clients," "potential customers," "leads," "prospects," and "customers" were often used. However, when discussing the same people but in a different environmental context—social venues, the exhibitors' language frequently changed. Attendees that were once described as clients, leads, prospects, and customers were often referred to as "friends."

I asked various exhibitors, what does being friends meaning? How do you define friendship? George deadpanned, "friends might be the wrong word." Other exhibitors such as Brad tried to explain what, exactly, they meant when they use the word "friends."

> It's almost like hanging out with your friends. Well, maybe not your friends, but somebody that you kind of knew and you got really liquored up and you guys became best friends. You trade shirts and then the next morning you're like, 'ah, that was just weird.' It was cool, but I'm not going to be BFF [best friends forever] or anything like that, right.

He went on to discuss the importance of developing a bond that is based on shared experiences. Even though it doesn't make you "BFF", it does feel more intimate than a business relationship in that moment. A few, like Steve, stated they viewed some them as legitimate friends,

120

Some of definitely, they are my friends. Like, if I was to go to their region and I wasn't going there for work and was there with my wife or whatever, I would call them. I would say, hey I'm here. Do you want to do something? Not all of them are at that level but some of them.

While a few exhibitors tried to conceptualize the meaning of friendship, such as being able to bond and "trade shirts" or getting together outside of work, George, Brad and most of the exhibitors I spoke with retracted the use of the word "friend." Some opted for terms like "kind of like friends," "pseudo-friends" or most the commonly used, "acquaintance."

Regardless of the specific term used, the exhibitors' use of language signaled a shift in the way they viewed the relationship when meeting in social venues. It was defined as a relation that fell between a pure market-based relationship and intimate friendship. Indeed, a "blurred line" forms as "a level of comfort or familiarity" grows from mixing business with pleasure. Brad explained how this shift unfolds through shared experiences:

> When you are out at dinner, yeah you get bottles of wine… That's what happens in these kinds of show. You get liquored up. You both compete on who can drink more wine or who can have more shots or whatever it maybe and then you always go home. You shake hands, you are great, you are happy as friends, and then you get up in the morning and its back to business. It just works that way.

He continued,

> We're like buddies now but there is no rehashing that moment because you don't have to. We did it. We were there. Now a year from now when I'm in a trade show in Orlando it will be 'hey, it's great to see you again!'

Others such as George and Steve, respectively, make connections by discovering commonalities and shared interests:

It could be a geographic location in a prior time in their life. [...] if you went to similar high schools, colleges, or if two people were the same age on 9-11, if two people were my age or had the same recollection of similar response to Watergate or the resignation of Nixon or near impeachment of Clinton or where were you when you heard that John Lennon got shot. Little things like that can be, you know, there is a shared [pause] you both went through those experiences and you can talk about those experiences and say 'wow, that was how I felt' or 'that is where I was in my life when that happened. I was the same age.' It's finding some commonality.

I would say it usually kicks off with a shared experience, some kind of relationship driven activity like grabbing dinner or going fishing... You realize, hey this guy likes the Chicago Bears and I like the Chicago Bears. Maybe when the Bears are playing I'll send him an email, stuff like that.

As experiences are shared and commonalities are discovered, relationships are formed and solidified. There becomes a personal element to the relationship that allows them to think of the relationship in a different context. As one exhibitor said to me, "you become more than just a salesperson." The relationship evolves from purely market based to something that feels a bit more personal.

The Benefits of Being "Friends"

A change in relationship status is significant. The experiences that are shared and the commonalities that are discovered serve to strengthen bonds and develop more meaningful relationships. This makes working together much more enjoyable. The exhibitors believe that having an element of enjoyment in a business relationship is important. One exhibitor at CTIA said,

Relationships are all that matter. If you, you can talk business all you want but if you don't *get alo*ng, it's kind of like being married. If you are going to grow old together, you might as well be happy together.

A G2E exhibitor shared,

I think so much of it is about sharing information so that you do develop these relationships. It make the whole process of working with them that much better because you have an idea of who they are personally and what their challenges are personally and on a professional level and how our products can help them. In our industry it is nice because we will run into these people many times throughout the year. So it adds a layer of enjoyment for them and for us because we are working together. It's not just a stranger that knows a product, I know you too.

Experiencing enjoyment or being happy together is important because work is ongoing. The exhibitors are in contact with them many times throughout the year. As indicated, if you have to correspond with someone and continuously work together, you may as well like each other.

Not only do more meaningful relationships make doing business together more enjoyable, it also advantages business. The advantage of a relationship or having some familiarity with one another beyond a purely market based relationship is people want to:

- do business with "good" people they "know and trust"

- help a "friend" succeed

- give a "friend" the benefit of the doubt when issues arise

The exhibitors I spoke with shared several instances when this occurred. The exhibitors shared how they use the relationship to obtain information that helps them succeed.

The first kind of information that I received from a client, I had been kind of working with them, I use to write proposals for them to win their work, and so after a couple beers I said, "You've got to help me out. I'm writing proposals and basically you want to help me do my job better. What are the important things to you?" He said, "Well, I don't know if I should be sharing this with you…" I was like, "oh, come on. You've helping me out. You're not giving me an edge really. You're just telling me how you review the proposals from everybody." And he gave me that information.

That's why I personally put an emphasis, if it works in the objectives, to get people away from the booth. (CTIA exhibitor)

We can that a coach or a champion. Yeah, it is somebody that you can meet with and he will give you inside information on who says what or who does what. Usually you take him offsite for lunch, don't take notes, and he give you the information you need. (G2E exhibitor)

The exhibitors acknowledge that issues are inevitable, particularly when working with

technology, but relied on the relationship to smooth things over:

You have to nurture that [relationship] and let it blossom…… There are times when things are going well and you are on the same page. Then somebody misunderstands something and without the relationship they say, 'okay, it's done. You're out. It's over." To use the metaphor of life, you have to get to adolescence [stage] with each other. You cannot still be infants. (G2E exhibitor)

All systems have flaws, bugs, issues, problems. […] They know you cannot control a system in terms of the engineering. What they can trust is your ability to work internally in your organization to get things fixed. [...] There is whole idea that it's more than I am buying a product. I am buying a product from Jim. I know Jim. I know I can give him a call. I know he is reliable and he is there and things like that… We also become more than a salesperson to them. We become Jim. They can talk to me comfortably and they can be candid... We really try to partner with them and that's where the personal relationship is highly valuable for everybody. (G2E exhibitor)

The advantages are difficult to replicate through any other means. It is important to

note, the advantages that stem from a relationship do not trump self-interest.

CONCLUSION

It is important to note that not all exhibitors use social venues as work spaces.

This is due to a number of reasons such as lack of management support, financial

budget, or not requiring the extra face time with attendees. Further, not all attendees

want to meet afterhours. Exhibitors felt it was part of their job to recognize who values

executive hospitality. While some attendees acknowledge and appreciate the effort a salesperson puts forth to show someone a good time, others would rather that time be spent on strict work-oriented tasks.

This chapter explores the differences between the tradeshow floor and social venues by analyzing their structure, expected use of time, and atmosphere, as well as the process of doing business in social venues in social venues. I organized the chapter in the same way many of the exhibitors discussed the different spaces—by comparing and contrasting them. While chapters four and five analyzed the tradeshow floor in great detail, this chapter emphasizes the process of doing business in social venues which include the subtleties of developing relationships. Social venues are uniquely different from the tradeshow floor. They have a complexity to them that extends beyond leisure (i.e. place to have fun) or function (i.e. place to eat). Eating and drinking, watching sports and listening to music are mixed with personal- and work-oriented conversation.

The dynamics of meeting in social venues are structured (patterned) differently than the tradeshow floor. There is a difference in who meets and the circumstances in which the meeting occurs. In social venues, exhibitors determine who to meet, often scheduling in advance, and the dynamics of the meeting, whether it is a small intimate gatherings or part of a larger hosted event. Meetings are usually gatherings of dyads, triads or groups of four to six. Smaller meetings are viewed as more intimate, private and even productive as they allow for interrupted face-to-face interaction. Social venues are distinct in that exhibitors are not passive bystanders waiting to be approached, as

dynamics are structured on the floor. Nor do they have to exert energy to stand out amongst the crowd.

The expected use of time is different in social venues. The purpose of meeting is to fulfill workplaces objectives such as establishing interest and outlying the expectations of working together, and foster the subtleties of doing business. The subtleties of doing business help a person determine "do I like this person?" and "would I want to work with this person?" The presence of time shapes how this unfolds. On the tradeshow floor where time is constrained, conversations are hyper-focused on product, brand and work and remain fixed on these topics. Moreover, time commitments are soft in that the nature of the tradeshow floor is for attendees to come and go. Anyone with a tradeshow badge can drop by the booth. In contrast, conversations in social venues are loosely-focused and weave work, leisure and personal topics together throughout the course of an hour or several hours. Time commitments are hard in that both parties commit to spending a chunk of time together. Exhibitor can devote their absolute attention to the person sitting across from them and engage in uninterrupted, in-depth conversation.

The exhibitors have an expectation of what will happen in each space. While the tradeshow floor is used to highlight a product, showcase a firm or serve as a forum to generate leads, the exhibitors utilize social venues (rather than the floor) to develop relationships. Leisure spaces and work spaces are generally thought of as two distinct spaces. While work spaces are serious and focused, social venues are much more relaxed in that work is de-emphasized as a topic of conversation and leisure activities

such as eating and drinking are conspicuous. This is not to say work is not discussed or

that meetings are not work-oriented. Rather, the setting allows business conversation

to unfold "naturally" over time as oppose to directing it. Meeting in a relaxing

environment or feeling relaxed while working has real implications that advantage

business. The exhibitors I spoke with shared several instances where people let their

guards down and disclosed information that they may not of otherwise. The exhibitors

used this information to win business and position their products in a way that speaks to

a customer.

In addition to changing the content of interaction, meeting in social venues can

impact the way in which exhibitors view their relationships. In this case, clients,

potential clients, leaders and prospects often became "friend." When I pressed the

exhibitors to define friendship, many recanted the use of the term, instead opting for an

acquaintance or "friend" like. These terms are used to represent a level of familiarity

between two people. The relationship shifts from prescribed work terms to

acquaintance or friend like occurs through shared experiences and commonalities. It

personalizes the relationship and makes it feel more personal. Of course the degree of

personal information shared varies by exhibitor; however even benign information such

as knowing their favorite sport team or where they vacation can create a bond to work

off of in the future.

The benefits of being "friends" are significant. It adds fun to an otherwise

routine encounter. It makes working together on an ongoing basis more enjoyable.

Perhaps more importantly, it has business benefits. The advantages of having a friend

like relationship or a sense of familiarity with one another beyond pure market relations is that people want to: 1. Do business with people they know and trust, 2. Help a friend succeed, and 3. Give a friend the benefit a the doubt when issues arise, and with technology-oriented products, they frequently do. It is important to note that these advantages do not trump self-interest. Also, if the context of business disappears, so too does the relationship.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In recent years, symbolic interactionists have answered Gieryn's (2000) call to situate place in our research. The work of Lyn Lofland (1998) and Melinda Mulligan (1998), in particular, have documented the relationship between built environment and social interaction and place and interactional potential, respectively. Inspired by their work, in this study I contextualize social interactions by accounting for the physical environments in which they occur. I analyzed what content is exchanged and why, from the exhibitors' perspective. This study adds to our understanding of interactions – what content is exchanged and where – in two temporary clusters. A tradeshow is an event that occupies many places such as the tradeshow floor, hotel rooms and airports, and social venues.

Temporary clusters are defined as "hotspots of intensive and dedicated exchange of knowledge, network building and generation of new ideas" (Maskell *et al.* 2004). Previous research on them analyzes one place, the tradeshow floor, to the exclusion of all other places utilized by tradeshow participants. However, the widely used definition of temporary clusters does not preclude social venues. In fact, some scholars have hypothesized the importance of the social environment in temporary clusters. For example, Maskell *et al.* (2006, p. 1002) said that "corridors, cafes, bars and similar meeting points may sometimes be the most important places for information exchange in temporary clusters." Power and Jansson (2008, p. 433) comment, "...the dance floor might be as important for some business networks as the factory floor."

Their hunches are correct. This study empirically documents that what happens in social

venues *does* advance business and business relationships in a very different way than

the interactions that occur on the floor.

SOCIOLOGICAL RELEVANCE / RETHINKING CLUSTERS

The social science and business literature is bustling with research on regional

and industrial clusters. Researchers have examined everything from the relationship

between geography and regional dynamics to the communication ecology and diffusion

of knowledge. More recently, researchers have extended the concept of regional or

industrial clusters to include the study of temporary clusters. Temporary clusters such as

tradeshows are hypothesized to mirror regional and industrial clusters, only on-going

shared geography proximity is replaced with short, intense spurts of togetherness. The

overarching question is can industries receive the benefits of clustering without actually

being in a geographic cluster?

The study of temporary clusters is relatively new, and in their research scholars

have paid particular attention the communication ecology that forms in formal and

informal gatherings. Clusters are environments teeming with people who share similar

interests, education, technical language, and resources. As a result, industrial

agglomeration are said to have something "in the air" (Marshall 1920). Likeminded

people can easily and accidently or unexpectedly find one another for "serendipitous

encounters," "serendipitous collisions" or "collisionable hours" (Hagel III and Brown

2010, Berfield 2014). Clusters, more so than any other places, produce a larger

probability that serendipitous interactions will occur. Such interactions are vital to

fostering innovation, spurring relationships and transferring knowledge. The advantages

are sometimes referred to as "being there" (Gertler 2003) and "buzz" (Stroper and

Venable 2002). In this study, I examine place characteristics – the tradeshow floor and

social venues, and how place characteristics shape the way exhibitors conduct business.

I found the short existence of CTIA and G2E's physical environment results in the

exhibitors finding it to be more significant, not less. This is counterintuitive to the

myriad of studies linking place attachment with the amount of time one spends in a

place. In the sections below, I briefly discuss the findings of this study and situate them

within the existing social science literature.

Structure versus Spontaneity

First, I examine how exhibitors use time in temporary spaces. Clusters are often

lauded, particular in mainstream business-related media, for the ease of interactions

based on proximity. These interactions are sometime called spontaneous or

serendipitous. Academic research add credibility to notion of how being in the right

place can advance one's career (Currid 2007). Place attachment is constructed by which

interactions occur, and the constructed meaning of those encounters (Mulligan 1998).

Similar to regional and industrial clusters, tradeshows are also viewed as 'hotspots of

exchange.' Opportunities for serendipity exist at CTIA and G2E, but the actual

occurrence of these types of interactions is somewhat limited due to the size of the

events and the highly coveted nature of time. The exhibitors construct time as too

valuable and the physical space too large to spend wondering around waiting to bump

into the right person.

Temporary clusters are in existence for a limited amount of time. CTIA and G2E

physically exist for less than one week each year. As such, time is highly coveted, valued

and approached with careful planning. I found that exhibitors not only structure their

time in the booth, but they actively plan and position themselves so seemingly

serendipitous and spontaneous interactions occur with the "right" people afterhours.

Other researchers have highlighted strategies used on the floor. For instance, Power and

Jansson (2008) and Bathelt and Schuldt (2008) found that exhibitors will walk the floor

and station people in high traffic areas in hopes of bumping into particular people. I

found that exhibitors take a more direct approach to meeting certain people. They

employ a series of strategies in order to meet with them, often making contact and

setting up in-booth meetings in advance.

After tradeshow hours, I found that some exhibitors structure their time by

meeting with potential colleagues and customers and hosting events. Of course there

are also exhibitors that do not utilize social venues. Some do not see the need to

entertain clients while others do not take full advantage of their time at the tradeshow.

Of those that do utilize social venues, they described an interactional exchange that

does not occur on the floor. Often they arrange dinner plans or to meet for drinks

before the show begins because attendees' availability fills up quickly.

Exhibitors also take advantage of hosting, sponsoring and attending targeted

events that have defined audiences such as Wireless Network breakfast or ATIS

Executives Roundtable at CTIA or Global Gaming Networking Reception or Latin

American Gaming Network reception at G2E. These events, while allowing for a degree

in spontaneity in terms of who you will meet, also reduce the randomness of who you

will encounter. In this regards, it is structured spontaneity in that one doesn't know who

he will meet, but he knows what is aggregating the group together. Targeted events are

viewed as more productive than participating in an event such as a welcome reception

where any of the 40,000 people with a CTIA badge or 25,000 with a G2E badge can

attend.

Understanding the dynamics between place and structure of time has great

implications: if one understands the dynamics of time, one can learn how to better

navigate and utilize their interactions within place. In the case of exhibitors, they

employ strategies such as making contact and planning meetings in advance, and

creating and participating in highly targeted opportunities that get one in front of their

target audience. This enhances and reinforces interactional potential, which thereby

enhances their attachment to places that temporarily host the tradeshow event.

The Importance of Being Noticed

Gertler's (1995) notion of "being there" has garnered a lot of attention in

academic literature, and for good reason. It is true that there is value in being at an

event, as one gains access to "undirected, spontaneous" information (Bathelt *et al.*

2004). However, the concept may be overstated when applied to tradeshow exhibitors. I

argue there is a distinction between "being there" and "being noticed." Being there

accounts the advantages that come from shared geography, especially access to a buzz communication ecology that forms in industrial gatherings (Bathelt *et al.* 2008). However, there is more going on than receiving information. I coined "being noticed" to denote the benefits of shared geography as well as actively garnering attention and standing out from the crowd. On the floor, exhibitors do not want to just receive information, they want to meet with people and dispense it. Firms who receive industry-wide praise, recognition and press do so not because they are "there." These benefits come from showing up and making a splash. It is the exhibitors that stand out from the crowd of industry peers that garners the most attention and benefits.

A walk on the floor highlights the extent firms will go to in order to be noticed. The exhibitors carefully select their booth position to increase visibility and accessibility. They spend time notifying potential and existing clients and colleagues before and during the show, and they employ creative marketing strategies while in the booth. In short, being there is often not enough to keep an exhibitor coming back year after year, but being noticed is. I draw attention to the different byproducts of participating in a space, and highlight how various groups construct and experience these byproducts.

The process of doing business in social venues

The bulk of sociological research on social networks analyzes the analytical constructs or structure of social networks through quantitative methods. Research in this vein produces statistical analysis of personal networks including a description of the network by population attributes as well as effects of network position. It can also

provide a formal network analysis of individual behavior and connections from network

position, exploration and description of network structure, as well as explanation of

systems behavior (Fuhse and Mutzel 2011). Analytical constructs extrapolate the form

of a network structure and produce 'abstractions of a complex social reality' that

signifies the existence of relationships (Fuhse 2009: p. 52). Yet, the structure or form of

social networks only provides partial understanding of the social phenomenon. The

other dimension of social network research is an understanding of transactions, or *what*

content is exchanged between people in social networks and *why* these transactions

occur (Fuhse 2009; Fuhse and Mutzel 2011; Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Fine and

Kleinman 1983).

The question of why transactions occur and what content is exchanged requires

a researcher to understand an actor's expectations. Fuhse (2009) and Fuhse and Mutzel

(2011) believe expectations stem from the prescribed nature of a relationship. For

example, business exchanges are based on negotiations, contracts and reputations,

which produce formal boundaries to guide the relationship. This is different from

kinship or familial ties which are bounded by informal social forces. The work of urban

sociologists such as Lofland (2003, 2008), Milligan (1998), Gieryn (2000) and others

situate place in the analysis. Their work demonstrates how place characteristics shape

an actor's expectations and norms, including how interaction occurs, who interacts with

whom, the content of interaction, and what interactions are perceived as possible in a

given space.

The exhibitors approach each place within a tradeshow event with an expectation of what will occur. While the tradeshow floor a product, brand, work-oriented place used to showcase a firm and engage the sales process from leads to deal-making, the exhibitors utilize social venues as a work, leisure, and relationship-oriented places. Leisure spaces and work spaces are generally thought of as occurring in two distinct spaces. While work spaces are finite and focused, social venues are much more relaxed in that work is de-emphasized as a topic of conversation and leisure activities such as eating and drinking are conspicuous. This is not to say work is not discussed or that these meetings are not work-oriented. Rather, the setting allows business conversation to unfold differently than it does on the floor. The exhibitors described it as occurring "naturally" over time as oppose to directing it.

Meeting in a relaxing environment or feeling relaxed while working has real implications that advantage business. Notably, the exhibitors begin to view the relationship differently as they become more familiar with one another. They move away from tertiary prescribe terms such as lead and customer to secondary terms such as acquaintance or friend-like indicates a shift to a more personalized relationship that extends beyond the market. The benefits of being "friends" is significant in that it makes an otherwise routine encounter more enjoyable and it opens up the range of conversation. The exhibitors I spoke with shared several instances where people let their guards down and disclosed information that they may not of otherwise. The exhibitors used this information to win business and position their products in a way

that speaks to a customer. By recognizing the characteristics of place, the exhibitors

develop and use strategies to get the most from their interactions within it.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research is oriented towards subjective meaning and in-depth

understanding over objective, quantifiable truth. Rather than make generalizable claims,

this study provides an in-depth, explanatory understanding that can be used to broaden

our understanding of the intersection of place and interaction as well as inform future

research. The findings of this study are not generalizable to the 1,100 exhibitors at CTIA,

450 exhibitors at G2E, or to exhibitors in general. Moreover, it is likely that attendees

experience a tradeshow in very different ways from exhibitors. This research does not

account for these differences. Further, the findings are not generalizable to all

tradeshows or temporary clusters. CTIA and G2E are the largest annual, international

tradeshows in their respective industries. However, there are several small mobile and

gaming tradeshows throughout the year. A study of attendees or exhibitors at a small

tradeshow would undoubtedly yield different results.

Moreover, while it was not my intention, this research inadvertently focused to

a large extent, although not completely, on how men conduct business in social venues.

I selected participants by who was willing to talk to me, and by firm characteristics, as it

seemed to me that what an exhibitor was able to do was largely impacted by the

resources available to him. In the end, I had obtained three formal interviews and a

small handful of informal interviews with women exhibitors. The male dominance visible

at these tradeshow is a reflection of a culture that values men in positions of power,

leadership and authority, particularly in organizing structures such as occupation,

politics and economics (Tiger 1969). These gender disparities are historical rooted and

institutionally embedded. It is important that researchers, particularly qualitative

researchers who deal with social construction and subjectivity, acknowledge these

disparities and to avoid the "taken-for-granted" of male dominance (Steward 2003).

The study of temporary clusters is ripe for meaningful analyzes. Future

quantitative research can produce baseline measurements on how often exhibitors

participate in different spaces, how many exhibitors utilize the different spaces, and

how much these place-based interactions impact their work. Qualitative researches, on

the other hand, can take a more nuanced look at the ways certain groups such women

or people of different generations do business or get noticed, as well as refine the

different places that are used. This research is not about one particular groups' process

for doing business, but rather *where* people do *what*. I emphasize spatial characteristics,

particular meaning and atmosphere, over group characteristics. I analyzed social venues

as an aggregate; however, future researchers can engage in ethnographic research that,

for example, divides social venues into categories such as restaurants, golf courses, strip

clubs, wine bars, sport bars, and so forth to get a more nuanced understanding of who

uses which spaces, why certain groups use these spaces, and how the different spaces

are used.

APPENDIX A: Data Collection Dates and Times

Event	Date of Events	Date of Fieldwork	Time of Fieldwork	Description of Fieldwork
Catersource	Conference March 10-13	11-Mar	11:45-1:30 1:30-6:15	Observe conference areas Door monitor for conference sessions
	Exhibition March 12-13	13-Mar	11:00-2:30 2:30-5:00	Observe conference and exhibition areas Attend conference sessions
Exhibitor2013	Conference March 17-21	16-Mar	8:45-2:00	Volunteer training and conference preparation
	Exhibition March 18-20	18-Mar	1:00-2:45 2:45-5:30	Observe exhibition area Door monitor for conference session
		20-Mar 21-Mar	2:00-3:30 8:30-10:00 3:00-4:30	Observe exhibition area Attend conference sessions
CTIA Wireless	Exhibition May 21-23	21-May 22-May 23-May	11:00-5:00 11:00-5:00 10:30-3:00	Data collection
Global Gaming Expo	Registration Sept. 22 Exhibition Sept. 24-26	22-Sept 24-Sept 25-Sept 26-Sept	8:45-1:00 11:00-5:00 11:00-5:00 10:30-3:30	Volunteer at registration table Data collection

Social/Behavioral IRB – Exempt Review
Deemed Exempt

DATE: April 22, 2013

TO: **Dr. Robert Lang,** Lincy Institute

FROM: Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects

RE: Notification of IRB Action
Protocol Title: The Meaning of Afterhours: How Exhibitors Use the Social
Environment to Generate Leads, Build Networks and Close a Deal
Protocol # 1304-4431M

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45CFR46 and deemed exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b)2.

PLEASE NOTE:
Upon Approval, the research team is responsible for conducting the research as stated in the exempt application reviewed by the ORI – HS and/or the IRB which shall include using the most recently submitted Informed Consent/Assent Forms (Information Sheet) and recruitment materials. The official versions of these forms are indicated by footer which contains the date exempted.

Any changes to the application may cause this project to require a different level of IRB review. Should any changes need to be made, please submit a **Modification Form**. When the above-referenced project has been completed, please submit a **Continuing Review/Progress Completion report** to notify ORI – HS of its closure.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects at IRB@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.

Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 451047 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-1047
(702) 895-2794 • FAX: (702) 895-0805

140

INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Sociology

TITLE OF STUDY: The Meaning of Meeting Afterhours: How Exhibitors Use the Social Environment to Generate Leads, Build Networks and Close Deals

INVESTIGATOR(S): Robert Lang and Chrissy Nicholas

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Robert Lang at 702-895-0088 or Robert.Lang@unlv.edu.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the **UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects** at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.

Purpose of the Study
Measuring the return on investment for business expenses such as client dinners and golf outings during a convention and trade show is said to be like "nailing jell-o to a wall." That is, the benefits of networking in a social environment are intangible and extremely difficult to quantify. Thus our understanding of the business interactions that take place in social spaces is antidotal at best and completely misconstrued at worse. This absence of knowledge has had real world consequences. It has become common place for firms to slash their budget for 'gathering' events at a time when business is more specialized and broad-reaching than ever before. A firm's success is often dependent on their connectivity to others, be it experts, suppliers, manufactures, or the cadres of people that help bring products or services to the marketplace. The purpose of this study is to gain a deep empirical understanding of how leads are generated, networks are created, and deals are closed in social spaces.

Participants
You are being asked to participate in the study because you are a trade show exhibitor over the age of 18.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: answer questions about your experience attending a trade show and conducting business in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Benefits of Participation
Research subjects will benefit from the knowledge and deep understanding that stems from an empirical analysis of how leads are generated, networks are created, and deals are closed in social spaces.

Risks of Participation

There are risks involved in all research studies. This research poses no physical risks. Pyschological risks may include: stress or discomfort over content discussed. Social risks may include stress or discomfort regarding: compromising or exposing business/personal relationships; compromising or exposing business/personal strategies; lose of work contacts or employment; revealing something the industry/firm/individual may not want revealed. Every effort will be made to avoid any risk to you.

Confidentiality

All identifying information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential. I will interview you at a public place of your choosing or by telephone. Your personal information including any identifying attributes such as employer or occupational title, as well as your involvement in this study will be kept confidential.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with UNLV. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Cost /Compensation

There is no financial cost to you to participate in this study. You will not be compensated for your participation. The interview will take approximately 15 - 90 minutes of your time.

Participant Consent:

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Participant Name (Please Print)

Audio Taping Consent:

I agree to be audio taped for the purpose of this research study.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date
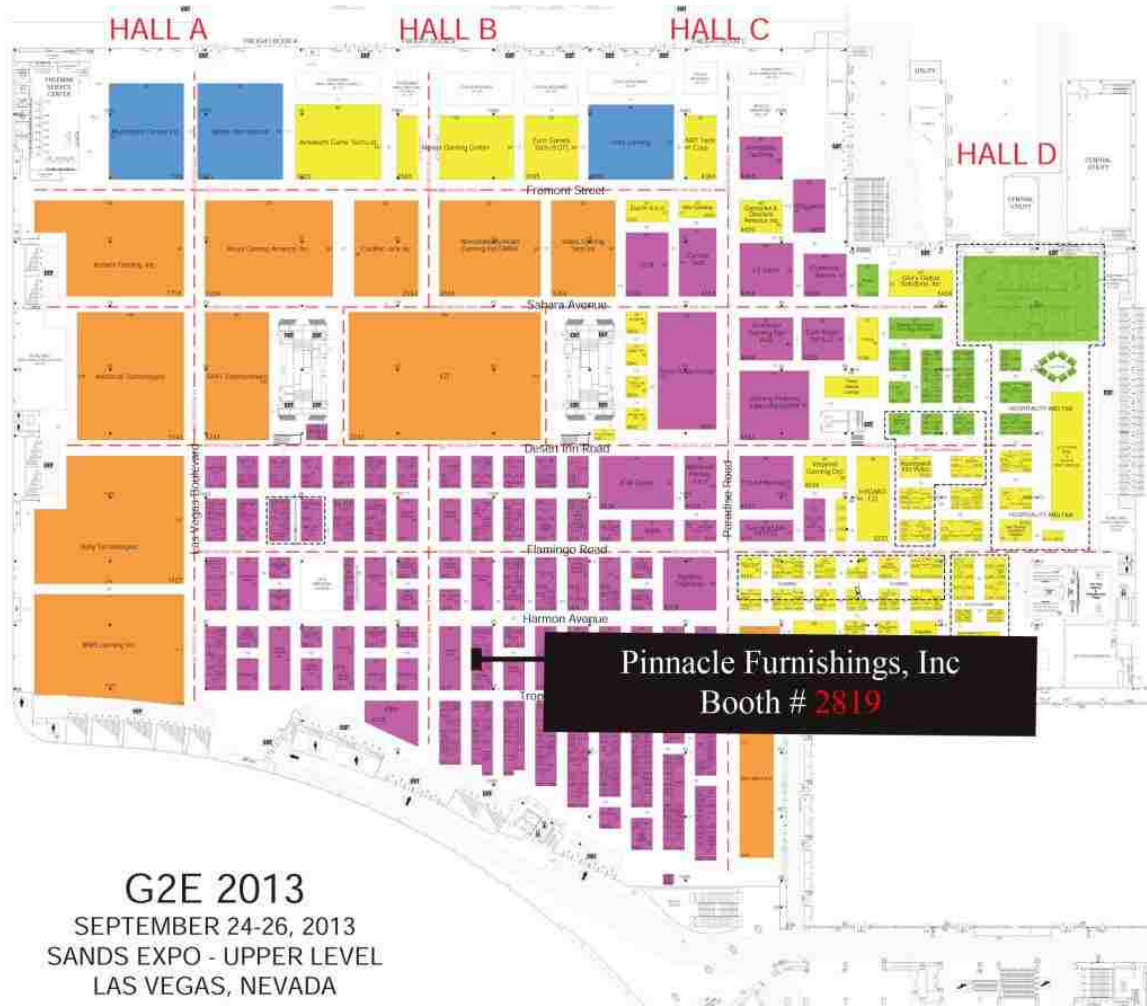

_____
Participant Name (Please Print)

Deemed exempt by the ORI-HS and/or the UNLV IRB. Protocol #1304-4431M
Exempt Date: 04-22-13

Source: CTIA 2013 Official Floor Guide

143

**APPENDIX D: Global Gaming Expo (G2E) Tradeshow Floor Rendering
(used as advertising tool by an exhibitor)**

Source: http://pinnaclefurnishings.com/visit-pinnacle-at-the-2013-g2e-sept-24-26-in-las-vegas/

References

Adler, Patricia and Peter Adler. 2001. "The Reluctant Respondent." Pp. 515-536 in

Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Publications.

Arednell, Terry. 1997. "Reflections on the Researcher-Researched Relationship: A

Woman Interviewing a Man." *Qualitative Sociology* 20(3): 341-367.

Bathelt, Harald, Anders Malmberg and Peter Maskell. 2004. "Clusters and Knowledge:

local buzz, global pipelines and the process of knowledge creation." *Progress in*

Human Geography 28(1): 31-56.

Bathelt, Harald and Nina Schuldt. 2008. "Between Luminaries and Meat Grinders:

International Trade Fairs as Temporary Clusters." *Regional Studies* 42(6): 853-868.

------. 2010. "International Trade Fairs and Global Buzz, Part I: Ecology of Global Buzz."

European Planning Studies 18(12): 1957-1974.

Bell, David. 2001. *An Introduction of Cybercultures.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Berfield, Susan. 2014. "Tony Hsieh Is Building a Startup Paradise in Vegas." *Bloomberg,*

December 30. Retrieved April 15, 2015

(http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles2014-12-30/zappos-ceo-tony-hsieh-las-

vegas-startup-paradise).

Blois, Keith. 1999. "Trust in Business to Business Relationships: An Evaluation of Its

Status." *Journal of Management Studies* 36(2): 197-215.

Borer, Michael. 2006. "The Location of Culture: The Urban Culturalist Perspective." *City and Community* 5(2): 173-197.

Borghini, Stefania, Francesca Golfetto and Diego Rinallo. 2004. "Using anthropological methods to study industrial marketing and purchasing: an exploration of professional tradeshows." Presented at Purchasing Conference. Copenhagen. Retrieved November 4, 2012 (http://www.impgroup.org/uploads/papers/4505.pdf).

Boschma, Ron and Anne ter Wal. 2007. "Knowledge Networks and Innovative Performance in an Industrial District: The Case of a Footwear District in the South of Italy." *Industry and Innovation* 14(2): 177-199.

Brenner, Neil and Roger Keil (eds.). 2006. *The Global Cities Reader.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Burgess, E. W. 1925/1967. "The Growth of the City," in R. Park, E. W. Burgess, and R. McKenzie (eds.), *The City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Burt, Ronald. 1992. *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Chacko, Harsha and Geogre Fenich. 2000. "Determining the importance of US convention destination attributes." *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 6: 211-220.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2001. "Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Analysis." Pp. 675-693 in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

------. 2007. "Constructionism and the Grounded Theory Method." Pp. 397-411 in *Handbook of Constructionist Research.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.

------. 2011. "A Constructivist Grounded Theory Analysis of Losing and Regaining a

    Valued Self." Pp. 165-204 in *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis:*

    Phenomenological Psychology, Grounded Theory, Discourse Analysis, Narrative

    Research, and Intuitive Inquiry. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Clark, Andrew. 2009. "Chips are down for Goldman's Vegas conference." *The* Guardian,

    February 10. Retrieved April 17, 2015

    (http:www.theguardian.com/business/2009/feb/10/goldmansachs-banking).

Corbin, Juilet and Anselm Strauss. 1990. "Grounded Theory Research: Procedures,

    Canons, and Evaluation Criteria." *Qualitative Sociology* 13(1): 3-21.

Cuba, Lee. 1988. *A Short Guide to Writing About Social Science.* Dallas, TX: HarperCollins.

Currid, Elizabeth. 2007. *The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, and Music Drive New*

    York City. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Durkheim, Emile. 1893. *The Division of Labor in Society*. Lewis Coser (trans.).

    New York, NY: Free Press.

Emirbayer, M. and J. Goodwin. 1994. "Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of

    Agency." *American Journal of Sociology* 99: 1411-1154.

Fine, Gary and Sherryl Kleinman. "Network and Meaning: An Interactionist Approach to

    Structure." *Symbolic Interaction* 6(1): 97-110.

Firey, Walter. 1945. "Sentiment and Symbolism as Ecological Variables." *American*

    Journal of Sociology 76: 847-856.

Fushe, Jan. 2009. "The Meaning Structure of Social Networks." *Sociological Theory*

    27(1): 51-73.

Fushe, Jan and Sophie Mutzel. 2011. "Tackling connections, structure, and meaning in networks: quantitative and qualitative methods in sociological network research." *Qual Quant* 45: 1067-1089.

Gailey, Jeannine and Ariane Prohaska. 2011. "Power and gender negotiations during interviews with men about sex and sexually degrading practices." *Qualitative Research* 11(4): 365-380.

Gergen, Kenneth. 1991. *The Saturated Self*. New York, NY: Basic Books

Gertler, Meric. 2003. "Tacit knowledge and the economic geography of context, or The undefinable tacitness of being (there)." *Journal of Economic Geography* 3:75-99.

Gibson, David. 2005. "Taking Turns and Talking Ties: Networks and Conversational Interaction." *American Journal of Sociology* 110(6): 1561-1597.

Gieryn, Thomas. 2000. "A Space for Place in Sociology," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 463-496.

Glaser, Barney and Anselm Strauss. 1967. *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Grabher, Gernot. 1993. "The weakness of strong ties: the lock-in of regional development in the Ruhr area." Pp. 255-77 in *The embedded firm: On the socioeconomics of industrial networks*. London and New York: Routledge.

Granovetter, Mark. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6): 1360-1380.

Gurney, Joan Neff. 1985. "Not One of the Guys: The Female Researcher in a Male-Dominated Setting." *Qualitative Sociology* 8(1): 42-62.

Harvey, David. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity.* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Johnson, John. 2001. "In-Depth Interviewing." Pp. 103-120 in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. 2012. "Las Vegas Stats and Facts." Retrieved November 4, 2012 (http://www.lvcva.com/stats-and-facts/)

Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson and Lyn Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Lofland, Lyn. 2003. "Community and Urban Life." Pp. 937-974 in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

------. 1998. *The Public Realm: Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory.* New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

------. 1985. *A World Full of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space.* Prospect Hills, IL: Waveland Press.

Marshall, Alfred. 1920. *Principles of Economics.* 8th Ed. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd.

Maskell, Peter, Harald Bathelt and Anders Malmberg. 2004. "Temporary Clusters and Knowledge Creation: The Effects of International Trade Fairs, Conventions and Other Professional Gatherings." *Spatial Aspects Concerning Economic Structures* 2004-04.

Maskell, Peter, Harald Bathelt and Anders Malmberg. 2006. "Building Global Knowledge Pipelines: The Role of Temporary Clusters." *European Planning Studies* 14(8): 997-1013.

McCall, George. 2003. "Interaction." Pp. 327-348 in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Milligan, Melinda. 1998. "Interactional Past and Potential: The Social Construction of Place Attachment," *Symbolic Interaction* 21: 1-33.

Moodysson, Jerker. 2008. "Principles and Practices of Knowledge Creation: On the Organization of "Buzz" and "Pipelines" in Life Science Communities." *Economic Geography* 84(4): 449-469.

Owen-Smith, Jason and Walter Powell. 2004. "Knowledge Networks as Channels and Conduits: The Effects of Spillover in the Boston Biotechnology Community." *Organizational Sciences* 15(1):5-21.

Park, Robert. 1925/1967. "The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment," in R. Park, E. W. Burgess, and R. McKenzie (eds.), *The City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Phillips, Jack, Monica Myhill and James McDonough. 2007. *Proving the Value of Meetings and Events*. Birmingham, AL: ROI Institute and Dallas, TX: Meeting Professionals International.

Porter, Michael. 1998. "Clusters and the New Economics of Competition." *Harvard Business Review* Nov-Dec.

Power, Dominic and Johan Jansson. 2008. "Cyclical Clusters in Global Circuits: Overlapping Spaces in Furniture Trade Fairs." *Economic Geography* 84(4):423-448.

Rinallo, Diego and Francesca Golfetto. 2011. "Exploring the Knowledge Strategies of Temporary Cluster Organizers: A Longitudinal Study of EU Fabric Industry Tradeshows (1986-2006)." *Economic Geography* 87(4):453-476.

Rogers, Tony. 2008. *Conferences and Conventions: A global industry*, 2nd Ed. Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

Sassen, Sakia. 2000. *Cities in a World Economy,* 2nd Ed. Newbury Park, CA: Pine Forge Press.

-----. 2001. *The Gobal City: New York, London, Tokyo,* 2nd Ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Saxenian, AnnaLee. 1994. *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Schilling, Melissa and Corey Phelps. 2007. "Interfirm Collaboration Networks: The Impact of Large-Scale Network Structure on Firm Innovation." *Management Science* 53(7):1113-1126.

Schuldt, Nina and Harald Bathelt. 2011. "International Trade Fairs and Global Buzz. Part II: Practices of Global Buzz." *European Planning Studies* 19(1):1-22.

Simmel, Georg. 1971 [1903]. "The Metropolis and the Mental Life." in D. Levine (ed.), *On Individuality and Social Forms.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Stebbins, R. 1969. "Social Network as a Subjective Construct: A New Application for an Old Idea." *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 6:1-14.

Steward, Mary White. 2003. "Gender." Pp. 761-781 in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Storper, Michael and Anthony Venables. 2004. "Buzz: face-to-face contact and the

urban economy." *Journal of Economic Geography* 4(4):351-370.

Suttles, Gerald. 1984. "The Cumulative Texture of Local Urban Culture." *American

Journal of Sociology* 90(2):283-302.

TAGL!NEGURU. 2012. "City Branding Survey." Retrieved November 4, 2012

(http://www.taglineguru.com/citymottosmonikers.html).

Tiger, Lionel. 1969. *Men in Groups*. New Burnswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Tonnies, Ferdinand. 1963 [1887]. *Community and Society*. New York, NY: Harper.

Torre, Andre. 2008. "On the Role Played by Temporary Geographical Proximity in

Knowledge Transmission." *Regional Studies* 42(6):869-889.

Tradeshow News Network. 2012. "2011 Top 250 Tradeshows." Retrieved November 4,

2012 (http://www.tsnn.com/datasite-us).

Trippl, Micheala, Franz Todtling and Lukas Lengauer. 2009. "Knowledge Sourcing Beyond

Buzz and Pipelines: Evidence from the Vienna Software Sector." *Economic

Geography* 85(4): 443-462.

Turner, Jonathan. 1986. *The Structure of Sociological Theory*. 4th Ed. Chicago, IL: The

Dorsey Press.

Associated Press. 2009. "Goldman Sachs moves meeting from Las Vegas." USA Today.

February 10. Retrieve April 17, 2015 (http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/money/

companies/management/2009-02-10-goldman-sachs-cancels-las-vegas_N.htm).

Vegas Means Business. 2012. "Get the Vegas Edge." Retrieved November 4, 2012

    (http://www.vegasmeansbusiness.com/why-choose-vegas/the-vegas-advantage/)

Williams, Christine and Joel Heikes. 1993. "The Importance of Researcher's Gender in

    the In-Depth Interview: Evidence from Two Case Studies of Male Nurses." *Gender*

    and Society 7(2): 280-291.

Wirth, Louis. 1938. "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *American Journal of Sociology* 44: 1-24.

Wolfe, David and Meric Gertler. 2004. "Clusters from the Inside and Out: Local

    Dynamics and Global Linkages." *Urban Studies* 41(5/6): 1071-109

Zukin, Sharon. 1995. *The Culture of Cities*. London: Blackwell.

Curriculum Vitae

CHRISTINA L. NANTON
4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89154
Chrissy.nanton@unlv.edu

EDUCATION	**Ph.D.**	**Sociology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, May 2014**

Dissertation: *What Happens in Vegas: How Tradeshow Exhibitors Use the Tradeshow Floor and Social Venues to Facilitate Business*
Advisor: Robert Lang, Ph.D.

M.A. Sociology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, December 2009
Study Abroad: Torino, Italy, Summer 2007

B.A. Sociology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, May 2003

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, Brookings Mountain West, 8/10 – Current
Advisor: Robert Lang, Ph.D.

- Co-authored academic article, book chapters, and technical reports on global cities and megapolitans; conducted literature reviews on broad range of metropolitan and political topics; retrieved Census and secondary data; systematized and analyzed Census, secondary, and interview data; corresponded with government and media entities as information and data source; supervised summer intern

Research Assistant, Las Vegas Metropolitan Area Social Survey Project, 8/08 – 5/10
Principal Investigator: Robert Futrell, Ph.D.

- Research team was awarded $25,000 from UNLV Presidential Research Award and $10,000 from Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition; conducted literature review on social sustainability; participant observation of City of Las Vegas town hall meetings; collaborated on survey design and sampling; mapped Census tracts in Clark County; organized five focus groups; transcribed focus groups; analyzed portions of focus group and survey data; co-authored reports on social, economic and environmental sustainability for City of Las Vegas and Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition

Community Relations and Government Affairs Manager, Strategic Solutions, 12/07 – 8/08
Community Relations and Government Affairs Intern, 8/07 – 12/07

- Developed written communication and outreach materials to dispense to targeted populations and general public; conducted policy research and developed recommendations for private sector clients; coordinated outreach events; co-authored numerous survey and focus group reports for public and private sector client; assisted in research design, data collection, and data analysis of surveys and focus groups

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Article

Lang, Robert and **Christina Nicholas**. "The World City of Gaming." *UNLV Gaming Research & Review Journal,* Vol. 15, Number 2, Pages 3-4*.* (October 2011)

Peer-Reviewed Book Chapters

Lang, Robert and **Christina Nicholas**, "Las Vegas: more than a one-dimensional world city?" In Derudder, B., Hoyler, M., Taylor, P.J. and Witlox, F. (eds) *International Handbook of Globalization and World Cities*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, Pages 853-870. (2011)

Lang, Robert and **Christina Nicholas**, "South Florida: world city, edgeless city?" In Derudder, B., Hoyler, M., Taylor, P.J. and Witlox, F. (eds) *International Handbook of Globalization and World Cities*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, Pages 872-886. (2011)

Technical Reports

Danielsen, Karen, **Christina Nicholas** and April Taylor. "Downtown Henderson Housing Market Analysis." Report prepared for the City of Henderson's Redevelopment Agency. (December 2011)

Lang, Robert and **Christina Nicholas**. "Integrating Business with Pleasure in Las Vegas." American Sociological Association *Footnotes*, Vol. 39, Number 3, Page 1. (March 2011.)

Futrell, Robert, Christie Batson, Barbara G. Brents, Andrea Dassopoulos, **Christina Nicholas**, Mark Salvaggio, and Candace Griffith. "Your City, Your Way Initiative: Focus Group Findings." Report prepared for the City of Las Vegas, 'Your City, Your Way' Citizen Engagement Initiative. (November 2010)

Futrell, Robert, Christie Batson, Barbara G. Brents, Andrea Dassopoulos, **Christina Nicholas**, Mark Salvaggio, and Candace Griffith. "Las Vegas Metropolitan Area Social Survey 2010 Highlights." Report prepared for the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Commission. Reports (USI). Paper 2. http://digitalcommons.library.unlv.edu/reports/2. (March 2010)

Media

Lang, Robert and **Christina Nicholas**. "From Metropolitans to Megapolitans" Citiwire.net. (April 7, 2012)

El Nasser, Haya. "The ins and outs of the 'burbs." *USA Today*, Page 3A. (April 27, 2011) Cited as a data source.

COMPETITIVE GRANTS	$2000	College of Liberal Arts Dean's Graduate Student Award, Summer 2012
	$900	Graduate and Professional Student Association, Spring 2012
	$2000	Patricia Sastaunak Scholarship, Fall 2011
	$1000	UNLV International Programs Scholarship, Summer 2007

SOFTWARE   SPSS and SAS Statistical Software, MS Excel / PowerPoint

PRESENTATIONS (* indicates presenter)

"What Happens in Las Vegas?" Gambling and Risk Taking Conference; Las Vegas, NV (May 2013)

"Metropolitan Water Policy in the Wet and Dry Sunbelts." (Robert Lang*, Christina Nicholas and Karen Danielsen), Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning; Salt Lake City, UT. (2011)

"Growth in the Mountain West: Micropolitan and Rural Perspectives." Regional Panel at American Sociological Association; Las Vegas, NV. (2011)

"Which Boomburbs is Still Booming?" National Conference on Suburbs and the 2010 Census; Arlington, Virginia. (2011)

"Are the Suburbs Really in Decline? Applying the Brookings County-Based metropolitan Typology to the 2010 Census." National Conference on Suburbs and the 2010 Census; Arlington, Virginia. (2011)

"Tell Me Some of Your Secrets." (Brooke Wagner* and Christina Nicholas*), Annual Meeting of the Society for the Studies in Symbolic Interactionism (SSSI); Champaign Urbana, Ill. (2007)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Human Behavior, College of Southern Nevada, 2010 – 2014
▪ Introduction to Sociology (11 classes)- Prepared and instructed courses, classes ranged in size from 10 to 50 students

Teaching Assistant, Public Administration, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2012 – 2014
▪ Introduction to Public Policy (3 classes)- Authored and reviewed exams and coursework, facilitated correspondence between professor and students

Teaching Assistant, Sociology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2005 – 2007
▪ Introduction to Sociology (3 classes), Marriage and Family (1 online class), Classical Theory (1 class), Modern Theory (1 class)- Graded exams and coursework, corresponded with students

Academic Tutor, The Center for Academic Enrichment & Outreach, 2006 – 2007
▪ Tutored academically at-risk individuals and groups in the subject areas of reading, math and study skills at Rancho High School
Awarded *Employee of the Month*, January 2007

SERVICE

▪ "UNLV's Invitation to Chamber of Commerce and Nevada Development Authority." One of five invited to speak about the opportunities available to UNLV students, 2011
▪ Volunteer for City of Henderson's Downtown Investment Strategy, 2011
▪ Graduate Student Representative, UNLV Dept. Of Sociology, 2009-2010
▪ Graduate Student Representative on Urban Sociology Assistant Professor Search Committee, UNLV Dept. of Sociology, 2008-2009
▪ Conference Arrangements Committee, Sociologist for Women in Society, 2007
▪ Roundtable Session Co-coordinator, American Sociological Association, 2006