Between Gifts and Commodities:

“Op Shops” in Dunedin, New Zealand.

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts
at the University of Otago,
Dunedin,
New Zealand

December 2012
Abstract

This thesis is a study of how a specific set of exchange relations is constructed, perceived and utilized. The research was conducted within and between specific second hand shopping sites – opportunity or charity shops in Dunedin. The research process included interviews and the transcription of these for data relating to consumers and their behaviours. Field notes were taken and provided a wider context for the research. I conducted the interviews with participants approached in the course of taking field notes. The results from a historical postal questionnaire were collated and added depth to details of the shoppers, the locations of and changes in physicality of the sites. I used a body of literature relating to consumption and consumers. Although there are large tracts of information on capitalist consumption practices and habits the literature on second hand consumption is still a relatively small body of work.

While opportunity shops appear as part of industrial/ capitalist society the means of both production and labour could be contested as being outside of capitalist based exchange forms. The basic formula for capitalism is negated in the structure of a charity shop. In all of the sites studied all goods/ stock are donated – profit is then immediate on the sale of the items. The value put on goods by both the managers and the consumers within these spheres of exchange is in contrast to the value of new goods. Thus I looked at how ‘op-shops’ fit within the formal and informal frameworks of acquisition. A new challenge uncovered in the Dunedin sphere of opportunity shops is the instigation of “retail charity” shops. These sites have been opened with the express concern of making profit rather than raising funds for local and national charities. The thesis discusses how these key changes have been promoted by the managers, and how they echo world-wide changes in the charity retail sphere.

My results show that opportunity shops have a specific niche in modern capitalism. They constitute a form of recycled consumption – where consumers’ re-value the remains of mass overconsumption. The thesis is about both the economic and social lives of opportunity shops in Dunedin.
Acknowledgments

Dedicated to my Grandma, Catherine Ellen Jean Patterson, my Nana, Rita Barbara Wilson and to my much loved dad, Kenneth John Wilson. Kathleen Janice Wilson (mum), I couldn’t have finished without your extra help and care of me and my boy, love and thanks.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my informants without them I would never have achieved this level of knowledge on my subject. It is due to the generosity of these people that my thesis moved from the initial stage through to the finished product.

Thanks to Associate Professor Jacqui Leckie for her patience in the long process of writing the thesis. Heather S (legend), Cathrine and Marj for your help in getting me closer to being “sorted” and for cup of tea time! Special thanks to Les for the prompt making of maps.

Special thanks go to Sharon Teavae & Rose Adams for their suggestions and comments on my (many), drafts.

I am indebted to all my friends who have been very patient and listened to and about the ‘thesis’ for so long. I expect you all to celebrate with me now it has ended! Tracey, Suzie & Cathy particularly have been there to listen when I needed them to and to tell me to get going when that’s what I needed as well.

For all the others who have been there to watch the process, thanks for the cups of coffee, shopping expeditions, emails and internet conversations and lunch breaks: Heather, Jim, Ayline, Genevieve, Bec, Cyril, Rochelle, & Manda.

To Ezra who has had to endure mum working at university, thanks my lovely for all the cuddles and kisses that you give me.

valerie
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Alternative Forms of Consumption in a Capitalist Society

Wandering around the streets of Dunedin I was struck by the juxtaposition between first and second cycle retail shops, and their contrasting appearances. How was it that normal retail shops and opportunity shops co-existed side by side when they present themselves as very different avenues for consumption? There were changes happening in the presentation of the sites more than a decade ago that sparked my interest as an avid user of “op shops”, and as an anthropological student. I witnessed the re-painting and physical changes in the spatial layout of the shops. This was almost always followed by an increase in the prices charged in the shops.

The first of these two different sites of consumption are the standardised sterile environments of branches of national or multi-national franchise chains, which provide conformity in their products, staff, and environments. Examples are McDonalds, StarBucks, (both international food chains), and Glasson’s (a trans-Tasman clothing chain). The second type and the subject of the thesis are the local, charity based and volunteer staffed opportunity or goodwill shops. Although opportunity shops are a subset of second-hand shops as a generic term they differ in their construction. The operating systems of opportunity shops are dependent on the donation of goods and time. They provide cheap or alternative forms of provisioning for mainly low or fixed income households.

The context for the research is Dunedin, a university city that has an annual influx of students every year at the start of the academic year and a correlating decrease in population at the end of the year. This city also has a large static population of residents. The sites under study are various opportunity shops within Dunedin, which are run by non-governmental organisations (NGO’s), most of which have religious affiliations.

Opportunity shops are embedded within local social structures and contribute in a great many ways that are not widely known about or understood by the public. Through the results of my research interviews I have been able to uncover how these relationships impact on the day-to-day running of the opportunity shops. The distribution of goods between opportunity shops in different geographical sites correlates to the perceived need of the consumers in the local area.
This in turn relates to the need to provide funds for the umbrella organisations under which the opportunity shops operate.

The motivation for fund raising by some of the charity-based organisations is to provide social services that are not provided by the government, local or central. Opportunity shops are part of a wider socio-political economy this is evident in the social services they provide in the wider community and through the provision of clothes and household items at cheap prices. The system of welfare support in New Zealand is large and includes payments to unemployed people as well as those on low and medium incomes in the forms of various income benefits, family assistance and child care subsidies. The benefits are paid across all age groups. The relevance to this thesis is that many people on these income payments are the customers of opportunity shops. Being on a benefit does not mean that you will “choose” to “op shop” however. In September of 2012 the unemployment rate for New Zealand was at 7.3%\(^1\), while 21.9%\(^2\) of all working age people were on government benefits.

The opportunity shops that I have studied are The Op Shop and Shop on Carroll - both run by the Presbyterian Support organisation, the St Vincent de Paul shops (one in south Dunedin and one on George Street), and the Salvation Army Family Stores (of which there are three in North East Valley, one on Princes Street and one in south Dunedin on King Edward Street). Other sites reviewed were The Corso Shop in Moray Place, Restore on the corner of Gordon and Vogel Streets, the Charity Barn on Kaikorai Valley Road, Orphans Aid International on Hillside Road and Butterflies, which is the cancer hospice shop is in Hanover Street. These twelve sites have all been changed physically or in location during the last decade. Two of the sites: Orphans Aid International and Charity Barn both opened in late 2010 so have provided an insight into the beginning processes of opportunity shops. I will discuss all of the sites in detail in chapters four and five. I become intrigued by the trajectories of the objects sold in the sites through my experience both as a shopper and donor of a single item - a cardigan. I purchased the cardigan from one op shop, and donated it to another op shop when I no longer wanted this item. A year later the same cardigan turned up in a different shop, and had been “fixed” by the intervening owner. How had this single item gone through three separately operated sites that had no communal theme apart from being “op shops”? These questions are what my thesis is based on.


the how & why of donations and the relationships between the sites. The cardigan was the beginning of the research process for me and as an object the cardigan represented my years as a student and a particular friendship. Simply put the cardigan was no mere item but very symbolic to me personally.

My research considers the exchange of goods, the biographies and trajectories the goods followed and the relationships they signified. The research also included those who shop in these sites and if economic restrictions played a role in their choice. The gifting of the remains of over consumption poses questions relating to charity, thrift and consumption itself. The initial moments of gifting are followed by various routes for the goods. How do moments of gifting objects correspond to alternative forms of acquisition? What is the correlation between these events and participation in the sites? The place of opportunity shops within a capitalist society appears to be a contradiction when mass produced goods can be acquired cheaply. The aim of the thesis is to find the place of opportunity shops in modern capitalist society. The objects in the sites are in transition, with their use-values and their economic value being reviewed by those who buy and sell within this market. Within these sites there seemed to be a paradigmatic shift of gifts into commodities.

Second-cycle retail sites hold the debris of continual mass consumption. They appear to exist due to the ongoing need to up-date objects. Consumption is a form of public display of monetary wealth, (or in the instance of opportunity shops a lack of money). The type of consumption in opportunity shops is based on the process of sifting through the detritus of other people’s lives. The re-evaluation of objects is inherent in this process. The shopping that takes place in these sites is a constant re-creation of value, whether for aesthetic or mundane purposes. As Clarke suggests: “... forms of acquisition carry ideological discourse” (Clarke 1998:75). Opportunity shops then create their own discourse based on the gifting of goods; a discourse of revaluing second hand goods and finding pleasure in hunting for treasures. Capitalism is the basis of our communal shopping society, as individuals we are encouraged to shop, to spend – to increase the wealth and economic health of our communities, (even in the midst of economic crisis). I am situating my research in charity or opportunity shops to gain an understanding of how opportunity shops overlap into capitalist ideology and society, but are outside of the specifically capitalist modes of production and consumption. My argument is that rather than being a part of capitalism opportunity shops are apart from it – distanced from capitalism by the donation/gifting of goods for sale. In order to address these issues I relied heavily on Gregson and
Crewe’s (2003) text, I argue, as do Gregson and Crewe (2003) that opportunity shops although participating in capitalist like behaviour do in fact run not alongside capitalist businesses but parallel to them.

As well as the social history of the sites themselves, the social history of the consumers and the importance of their role provide reasons as to why these shops still exist. Opportunity shops appear to link people back to concepts of society as a communally bounded place. The donations of goods to a charity shop would seem to imply awareness of those less fortunate.

Consumption within charity shops is the sale of goods for money. However the goods are always donated, the prices are lower than in profit driven retail sites and the shoppers are often donors as well. The prices set in charity shops are not always the price paid – my research has shown that prices are reduced at the point of sale. This indicates the charitable nature of charity retail in Dunedin. Capitalism is based on the supply of a good at a price set by the retailer to make a profit. Charity retail is based on a sporadic supply of donated goods, sold at low prices to raise funds. Capitalist retail sites have to pay for the goods sold and then make a profit. Charity retail shops receive “free” goods and make profit from any sale. In most discussions of consumers and consumption it is assumed there is dyadic relationship between shopper and goods. In this thesis I contend that the relationship between goods and consumers is a triadic one between the consumer, the goods and the original consumer mediated through the gifting process.

Another aspect of the research was to see if the charity sites are productive makers of profit. As indicated by the changes in many of the research sites they would seem to be not profitable enough. This once again brings us back to the place of charity in capitalism. Given that the shops work on the basis of donation, are they in fact part of the capitalist economy or apart from it? The term charity retail fits into this discussion as it bridges the gap between charity and capitalism. Charity and capitalism seem to have little to connect them at first glance. Bringing opportunity shops closer to normal retail shops in appearance and managerial structure does not negate the differences. My research suggests that the closer the charity shop is to a capitalist layout the more the differences become apparent. The capitalist based changes are more likely to create a feeling of distance for the consumers of opportunity sites.

Because the research was initiated a decade ago, there is much scope for a historically based comparative analysis of the changes in the sites and in the practices of those who participate in
opportunity shops as consumers and workers. I have used this “old” data to supplement my current knowledge of opportunity shops. This has added a depth to my research and helped refine my original aim, which was to understand where opportunity shops were situated in a capitalist economy/society.

This thesis will show that a hybrid form of gift–commodity is applicable specifically to opportunity shops. Gifting is in this case the basis for production prior to consumption + donation = secondary consumption, which immediately takes opportunity shops outside of the usual capitalist mode of production, which is labour - production - consumption. It raises the question, how do sites so intrinsically formulated within gift exchange then fit into capitalist society? This is where the goods themselves become the cornerstone of the thesis. The provisioning of goods that follow many trajectories seem to intertwine and increase the interconnectedness between the charitable organisations in Dunedin is also under study. Gregson and Crewe’s (2003) work was wider in scope than this, and considers other types of second hand trade, as well as the charity retail shops in England. Their work has been fantastic as a comparative tool – for both other types of second hand retail and in the relation to the current changes happening in Dunedin’s charity retail sector.

As with all anthropological study my main interest is in people’s relationships - in this case to the remains of material culture. This includes the re-valuation of objects and the symbolic values that are placed on second-hand goods. What has been seen in Dunedin, as in other cities across the country, is the establishment of “up-market” second-hand stores. This is where the value of the goods lies in the appeal of the past, and the knowledge that is deemed appropriate in the purchase of these items. How do these sites differ from opportunity shops? Are there any distinctions between the people who shop in these sites? These questions will be answered in the course of the thesis.

Following on from the introduction the second chapter will discuss theories and studies of consumers and consumption. I have accessed a large body of work that relates to consumption within capitalism. I will present a variety of ideas on gift and exchange theories that are important for my discussion that opportunity shops provide a hybrid form of the gift-commodity exchange. The body of literature on aspects of mundane shopping will also be discussed. The third chapter is about the research process and looks at the tools and paradigms I have used to gather information. A combination of informal interviews, fieldwork notes and volunteering in a
site provides the main body of my own research. I will also use the tool of historical comparison through the use of a postal questionnaire that was formulated in the initial research period in 2001. The processes associated with each form of research have provided a comprehensive overview of anthropological research methods. Chapter four is a history of opportunity shops in Dunedin and how they have evolved. I will present information about each of the sites that have been studied. This will create an overview of the place of opportunity shopping within Dunedin. The fifth chapter examines different strategies between business and charity shops. I will include discussions on the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), and the Christchurch earthquakes in relation to the impact these two events have had on the sites. I will examine the roles of the consumers and volunteers within this chapter. Results from my research contribute to the body of this chapter. The final chapter is a discussion of my conclusions and brings me back to the point of the thesis: to substantiate my theory that opportunity shops, although part of western capitalist economies, are separate from the mainstream economy. I will define the hybrid of gift - commodity that dominates the world of opportunity shops, and how it sits within the capitalist economy.

I hope to have achieved a small inroad into the study of second hand consumption in the specific context of charity shops. The research available on second hand consumption was limiting, I have relied heavily on Gregson and Crewe’s (2003) text, because of this lack. The area of gifts and exchange is much larger and is represented by Appaduari (1986), Mauss (1925/2000) and also Douglas & Isherwood (1979). These works have all provided a basis for my research into consumption behaviours. As a subject for anthropological research shopping would appear to be undervalued and under estimated. The thesis was started as a response to the changes that were occurring a decade ago. The length of time that the thesis has been in gestation has added to the depth of personal knowledge on the subjects involved — the sites, the managers and volunteers within them. How the shops have changed and how they present themselves today is quite different in most cases to how they were presented a decade ago. I am uniquely placed to consider what the changes mean to both consumers and the organisations behind the sites.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The place of consumption in modern society has many proponents as a valid topic for study. I hope to show in this chapter that there is a specific place for the study of the social and cultural components of second-cycle consumption. Second-cycle consumption is distinct from that of first cycle where goods first come in to the market place as commodities. I have accessed much of the literature from Mauss (1925/2000) and his essay on the gift, to contemporary writing on the subject of second-hand shopping: through Herrmann’s work on garage sales (1993) to Gregson and Crewe’s (2003) work on three distinctive forms of second-hand consumption, retro shops, charity outlets and car boot sales. I will show how the framework of capitalism has narrow limitations when applied to the reciprocity involved in the second-hand culture of opportunity shopping. The movements from western capitalism being dependent on a productive process to becoming a consumer society, as discussed by Bauman (1999), will be traced in relation to second-hand consumption.

I will also consider how the place of the consumer is presented in western capitalism through research on shopping which informs my knowledge of the practices involved. How has the role of consumption changed to become a large part of self-identity in contemporary society? The research builds on existing understandings and incorporates them into the study of second-hand consumers, as distinct from first cycle shoppers.

The discussion on consumption as a relevant topic for study started with research into ‘other’ non-western societies. Working from archaic through to modern societies, theorists have placed capitalism firmly in the modern present. Consumption has been connected to ritual gifting and in this context both Mauss (1925/2000) and Miller (1998a) provide the basis for consumptive unravelling.

The concepts of gift as distinct from commodities, and the differences between them form a major part of the thesis. Opportunity Shops are distinctive in the creation of an intersection between gift and commodity, starkly opposed to normal retail outlets. The goods that are given or donated are re-created into commodities. This process is explained with the help of both historical and contemporary literature. My research relates not only to the social relationships
between the Salvation Army, Corso, St Vincent de Paul, Butterflies and Restore shops but also the relationships of exchange within and between them and other social agencies in Dunedin.

The research involves many different theories, from ideas on the gift (Mauss 1925/2000), to the re-commodification process (Appadurai 1986). I will reveal how the different theories on gift giving and provisioning (Narotzky 2005), the social relationships inherent in these processes and shopping all, combine to introduce a hybrid form of gift-commodity.

2.1 Gifts and exchange

The concept of the gift is not a new one in anthropological literature. Mauss (2000) first bought the gift into the realm of academic study when he considered archaic or pre-industrial societies. By this I mean his discussion of the ritual acts of both Kula and Potlach. Kula is a Melanesian ritual that involves the circulation of shell arm bands in one direction and the circulation of shell beads in a counter clock wise direction (Malinowski 1961:81). Potlach is a Native North West American ritual that involves feasting and the ritual burning of masses of consumer durables of ritual value studied by Franz Boas (Roher 1969). Both of these practices are conducted to prove the value and status of local chiefs. Although practiced in different parts of the world they are similar in function. Mauss (2000) used these rituals to show how “systems of total services” (2000:5-6), meaning three entangled parts of social life; religious, social and economic operated instantaneously. Reciprocity, Mauss (2000) argued, was the key to these gift giving rituals. Maussian theory says that reciprocity is inherent in gift giving and that the gift retains part of the giver/ owner. The gift giving itself is broken down into three different stages: gift – obligation (to return) – reciprocity. Mauss further suggested that these acts become entwined and promote social relationships (2000). Certainly in the instance of opportunity shops gift giving and reciprocity is seen. That the gift keeps something of its original owner is contentious in this case.

Appadurai’s work brings the idea of reciprocity and gifting into the realm of capitalist society (1986). The shift in focus on capitalist cultural behaviour is a large one within the context of anthropology; previously the “othering” of “exotic” communities drew much attention. Appadurai’s (1986), *The Social life of Things* highlights the gifts and commodities as distinct areas of exchange within capitalist society.
“Gifts, and the spirit of reciprocity, sociability, and spontaneity in which they are typically exchanged, usually are starkly opposed to the profit-oriented, self-centred, and calculated spirit that fires the circulation of commodities. Further, where gifts link things to persons and embed the flow of things in the flow of social relations, commodities are held to represent the drive – largely free of moral or cultural constraints – of goods one for another, a drive mediated by money and not sociability.” (1986:11-12)

Appadurai suggests that this is in fact an oversimplified version of the difference between gifts and commodities. Influentially Appadurai used the terms “regimes of value” (1986:4) and “tournaments of value” (1986:21) to discuss social groups and their abilities to enclave objects, to refine and define the place of specific objects and how both social groups and objects maintain their social status within communities. Appadurai states: “... commoditization lies at the complex intersection of temporal, cultural and social factors” (1986:15).

In this respect regimes of value are like Mauss’s (1925, 2000), “total social facts” combining all sources of social power at one junction. The economic value of the object may therefore be deemed irrelevant; the object’s total value is socially adjusted. Further to this explanation Appadurai suggests that “tournaments of value”: “... are complex periodic events that are removed in some culturally well-defined way from the routines of economic life.” (1986:21)

Appadurai maintains the “fundamentally contrastive and mutually exclusive” (1986:11), roles of gifts versus commodities. I will use Appadurai to elaborate on a hybrid form of gift and commodity that I think is missing from discussions on economic value (1986).

Kopytoff’s (1986) The Cultural Biography of Things, suggests that objects have both social and cultural histories. Kopytoff utilizes the human slave trade as the lens with which we can see how at different points in the life of any good it can go through very many stages such as commodity, valued object, a piece of family history and for some objects once again back to commodity (1986:65). Kopytoff’s point that the commodification of an object is not the main part of the life cycle but the beginning of an object’s social and cultural history has resonance within my own research. Commodities, (even if human), are given identities in order to be categorized and fulfil an economic or social value. Kopytoff stresses the categorizing of goods, by saying that everything in life has a category – this is so that humans can understand their place and status in society (1986:64-68). Goods have biographies attributed to them and anthropologists can study
them in relation to the time period they are used in. What cultural significance is given to them and what becomes of the objects once they have outlived their usefulness are two questions that arise out of Kopytoff’s research on objects possessing cultural biographies. Kopytoff’s work on the culturally significant changes in the slave trade provides an insight into the moral economy and the changing biography of people contained within this shift.

“Biographies of things can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure. For example, in situations of culture contact, they can show what anthropologists have so often stressed: that what is significant about the adoption of alien objects – as of alien ideas – is not the fact that they are adopted, but the way they are culturally redefined and put to use.” (Kopytoff 1986:67)

Kopytoff’s work has relevance to the study of second hand consumption - cultural redefinition or re-valuation of second-hand goods is at the heart of this thesis. Objects have social lives and move within and between many variations of value within their lifetimes. Kopytoff’s definition of what a commodity actually is:

“... anything that can be bought for money is at that point a commodity, whatever the fate that is reserved for it after the transaction has been made...
...in the West, as a matter of cultural shorthand, we usually take saleability to be the unmistakeable indicator of commodity status, while non-saleability imparts to a thing a special aura of apartness from the mundane and the common.” (1986:69).

Kopytoff stresses that the ‘gift’ does not fall into the category as a commodity. Instead he suggests that the gift is in fact part of a larger exchange as in the initial gift in a marriage, where the first gift is part of a partial transaction (1986:78-79). Hence the dichotomy of gift and commodity is revealed as being once again the basis for different spheres of exchange. In the context of my research, re-commodification starts with the gift. It is not an end point but the starting point of a new biography. The gift starts the exchange process.

Herrmann’s (1997), Gift or Commodity: What Changes Hands in the US Garage Sale? provides valuable insight into the informal market place. Herrmann’s interest is in the place of garage sales in the United States within capitalist market economies. Although garage sales and opportunity sites are very differently constructed both can be seen as informal places of consumption (1997). Herrmann argues that the garage sale “… simultaneously cloaks and
facilitates a web of transactions that are often as much as or more socially engaged as economically rationalized” (1997:912).

“It is the act of selling possessions, or converting them to a monetary value, that (re)commodifies them in the garage sale context” (1997:916).

I would argue that the conversion to the objects having monetary value is imperative in the functioning of opportunity shops as well. Herrmann suggests as garage sales are contained within the private sphere (homes), this diminishes the capitalism inherent in most shopping. There is a range of interpersonal discourse that takes place within the context of garage sales that can be adjusted to a discussion within the sphere of opportunity shops as well.

Although her work is on garage sales, Herrmann did discuss the charitable aspect of garage sales as selling at give-away prices, rather than true charity (free). Again the difference’s between gifts and commodities has made itself apparent in the literature available. Herrmann suggests that with the ability to purchase items cheaply shoppers can become: “… small - time philanthropists for friends and relatives” (1997:923).

This would appear to be a common theme in the context of second hand shopping as I witnessed similar behaviour in my own research.

Herrmann suggests a need for a framework that addresses the differences between gifts and commodities but does so with acknowledging the nuances and socially constructed variations between them (1997). Within this thesis I will attempt to provide a small foray into a gap between the commercially driven commodity and the donation of the gift within opportunity shops. Clearly a hybrid of the gift and commodity does exist within our capitalist society. I will discuss this at length in my chapter on businesses versus charity.

2.2 Mundane shopping

Clarke’s (1998) work on home consumption and Miller’s essays on grocery shopping (1998a) provide a contemporary starting point for studies within capitalism. Consumer choice is always
restricted by the income of the consumer, access to different forms of money; whether this is a credit card or overdraft that can allow for extended participation in normal consumptive life regardless of actual income. Within the confines of second hand shopping, however the ability to buy mass produced goods at a fraction of their original cost would appear to be both a motivator for participation as well as a possible indicator of restricted income. What I hope to address in this thesis is the change in second hand consumption from being an economic necessity to being a choice. This is in respect to the changes within the consumers of the sites and does not necessarily mean that all “op shoppers” have economic choice. The choice creates and promotes ideas of thrift, recycling and specific shopping skills.

I have used two ethnographies that have helped to structure my own research processes. They both consider different aspects of mundane shopping, through the everyday purchase of food (Miller 1998a), and goods for the home (Clarke 1998).

Clarke’s’ (1998) “Window Shopping at home: classifieds, catalogues and new consumer skills”, is an ethnographic study that looks at how households use catalogues as a means of budgeting and as a form of consumptive socialization. Clarke looks specifically at households as crucial sites of power and information in regard to consumptive practices. The household becomes at once the place of browsing and the place of purchase.

“The myriad decisions and complexities of household provisioning embody consumption as an arena of power in which social relations and knowledge are constantly rehearsed, rearranged and challenged” (Clarke 1998:73).

The catalogues are used for informally looking at objects within the sanctity of the home. Clarke discusses how these catalogues also allow for budgeting within the families whilst providing access to knowledge of “high street tastes and prices” (1998:93). Clarke considers informal acquisition based on catalogues and the formal structuring of shopping in newsprint media (1998). This ethnography was done in conjunction with one on formal shopping skills, carried out by Daniel Miller (1998a). Clarke’s ethnography brings into sharp focus the importance placed on consumption within anthropology, but fails to extend the category of consumption outside mass consumption practices. Clarke does however review skills and patterns of consumption that are in some ways applicable to second-hand consumption within charity shops (1998). Clarke’s research considers social divisions relating to class status and
ideas pertaining to class and credit and debt. These are discussed in relation to the use or not of the catalogues or newspapers: “…provisioning is not only a question of obtaining goods, but also the application of particular schemes of knowledge and style to particular genres of information about goods” (Clarke 1998:74).

My research is specifically defined in formal sites of consumption, retail space. The skills used to obtain goods in these sites do have similar traits to those posited by Clarke (1998). Clarke’s recognition of the different sources of provisioning available and the different skills needed; an ability to “read” ads, knowledge of “high street” prices has a correlation in my own study (1998). It would seem that in order to make use of the second hand market one needs to have a substantial knowledge of the first cycle or high street prices.

Studies of mundane shopping practices often include reference to class structures. Although these are evident in New Zealand I am not convinced that they are as embedded within our social stratification as they are in England. I would suggest that as a society New Zealand allows much more movement between social and economic classes. I say this to permit a theoretical reading of Miller (1998a), with the recognition of the different ways our societies work. Miller’s study is firmly entrenched within the sphere of ordinary consumption as it focuses on the supply of food through grocery shopping. Miller uses the concept of sacrifice to display formulations of familial or romantic love. To put this in context more firmly Miller believes that shopping practices are full of ritualistic behaviours that uniquely reveal social relationships (1998a). My own research has revealed ritualistic and sacrificial behaviours of shoppers in the context of the second hand market. I use Miller’s study as a point of reference for my own work even though our shopping contexts are dissimilar.

“Sacrifice as an act of consumption must always evoke the spending of what has been created or gathered.”(Miller 1998a:90)

Miller posits that the ideas of thrift and treat are among our modern sacrificial rituals (1998a). I have used these ideas to position thrift and treat into a specific component of second hand shopping. Both of these studies hint at the concept of provisioning that is discussed in the next section. Thrift and treat occur repeatedly in the literature on consumption, and even Herrmann’s (1997), discussion on alternative provisioning allows for these actions to occur. They can perhaps been seen as a part of the consumptive process as they seem to cross levels of consumption.
2.3 Economic anthropology

Following on from Mauss (1925/2000), Douglas and Isherwood (1979) describe the act of consumption as an active process in which all cultures participate. As Douglas and Isherwood point out ethnographic practice treats material possessions as being encoded with social meaning (1979). Douglas and Isherwood consider various theories in relation to the study of consumption, suggesting that a problem in this area is that social meanings are constantly changing and it is therefore hard to associate specific meanings to goods over long periods of time (1979). This text considers the place of ritual in consumptive behaviour, as other anthropological literature does (Appadurai 1986, Miller 1998a). This aspect of commodity and social relations then would appear to be central to ideas on consumption. Rituals are sets of regulations that restrict the “...drift of meanings...” (Douglas and Isherwood 1979:65). The social value of objects changes over time; consequently people purchase goods because of the meanings they hold at specific moments. This process of changing meaning holds special relevance to the objects of second hand consumption. The processes of gifting and re-commodification are inherent specifically in second hand consumption. Douglas and Isherwood view goods as having a dualistic role, firstly they are for subsistence; secondly they help to define the lines of social relationships (1979). In the confines of my research these constantly changing roles have a valuable significance. How and who changes the values of the goods is one of the ideas behind the thesis.

This text specifically combines research between two academic disciplines, economics and anthropology. Douglas and Isherwood opened the way for a new form of research that is a combination of economics and anthropology. In arguing for this Douglas and Isherwood define the differences between the two, with economists being focused on the paths of goods and anthropologists defining goods only in relation to their social relationships (1979). They provide for a reassessment of the place of consumption between the two schools of thought.

The process between economy, specifically monetary, and society are discussed by Parry and Bloch (1989). They argue that the construction of money varies across cultures and whatever the culture money is represented as: “... acts as an incredibly powerful agent of profound and cultural transformation” (1989:3).

They dispute that pre-industrial societies transformed into capitalist economies based on money are the beginnings of capitalist enterprise. Instead they argued that anthropologists are in danger
of fetishizing money, as they say both Marx (1969) and Simmel (from Bottomore and Frisby 1978) did, and that more thought on the processes surrounding economy and society are needed (Parry and Bloch 1989:5-7).

Parry and Bloch’s influential text *Money and the Morality of Exchange* considers the social construction across various cultures of money, whatever the cultural matrix it is in “… *money acts as an incredibly powerful agent of profound and cultural transformations*” (1989:3). Bloch and Parry argue that money may end up being fetishized as they argue both Marx (1969) and Simmel (1978) did, they use them as examples of the scholars who did this and further say that the power of money has been overemphasised: “*Money permits possession at a distance*” (1989:5-6). This they argue is in contrast to the gift, which retains something of its owner, with an exception: “… *the idea that the very impersonality of money makes it of questionable appropriateness as a gift (except significantly in charitable contexts where the relationship between donor and recipient is similarly impersonal) seems to be a peculiarity of our own culture*….” (Parry and Bloch 1989:8).

In a critique against anthropologists, Parry and Bloch argue that anthropologists view money as representing an intrinsically revolutionary power which inexorably subverts the moral economy of ‘traditional’ societies. There is a further tendency to represent money as the crucial agent of social and economic transformations (Parry and Bloch 1989:12-15). Parry and Bloch argue that Kopytoff (1986) has done this in his work on the biography of objects.

“… *the meanings with which money is invested are quite as much about a product of the cultural matrix in to which it is incorporated as of the economic functions it performs as a means of exchange*”(Parry and Bloch 1989:21).

The meaning of money is not only defined by the situation it is in but is also constantly renegotiated. Parry and Bloch suggest that there are variations in the multiple meanings of money across different cultural communities. In other words money changes whichever social context it is in but this is not always to the moral detriment of that society. Parry and Bloch (1989) promote an approach to money as representative of capitalism that does not reflect on money per se as on the different values it has.
Williams’ (2003) article considers two contrasting views on alternative consumption practices. Williams is a geographer concerned with people’s relationships to the urban landscape. He considers both the locations of lower and middle income populations, shops and the means of public transport. First he argues that alternative means of acquisition are used out of economic necessity by some consumers and secondly that such behaviour is more a matter of choice for others. By clearly making the distinctions between necessity and choice in shopping Williams’ discusses the need to study both of these types of consumers to gain a deeper understanding of the position of consumption within the shops. Williams (2003) considers a variety of studies on urban studies that treat the use of second hand consumption as either economically motivated or as a distinct choice of affluent consumers. Williams discusses economic constraints as one factor, and the place of individual agency in choice as another. Contrasting an economic argument with specifically ethnographic research based on alternative consumption Williams asks: “…whether it is possible to reconcile these apparently mutually exclusive explanations for participation in alternative consumption practices” (2003).

Williams argues that viewing only one type of economic group does not allow for the inclusion of other variations on alternative forms of shopping. Williams discusses how different groups have different motivations for the same shopping practices, and how studying different groups limits the research, he argues that variation in samples is needed to access meanings of alternative consumptive practices. Williams’ research was carried out in Leicester in England. The and/or basis of his research that all types of socio-economic groups use the sites of second hand consumption but for differing reasons has parallels in my own research. The motivations behind different economic groups participation is however the same in Dunedin as it is in Leicester. Williams’ research revealed that second hand sites were more prominent in more affluent neighbourhoods, with public transport being more available in these areas making the shops more accessible.

The inhabitants of these areas also frequented the shops regularly but more for the “fun”, “social” element of shopping than through economic necessity (Williams 2003). I find Williams work to offer a recent comparative analysis to my own work. I do not disagree that a wider discussion of the variations of alternative shoppers is needed. However within the context of my

\footnote{3 http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0264-2751(03)00048-9}
own research I do gather information from a variety of social classes and this is reflected in my results.

Narotzky provides an excellent discussion of the role of provisioning. This concept is described as: “...a complex process where production, distribution, appropriation and consumption relations all have to be taken into account and where history defines particular available paths for obtaining goods and services” (Narotzky 2005:78).

Rather than the term supply which I have previously used to discuss the donation of goods in opportunity shops, provisioning as a term encompasses the variety of paths that goods take in this context. In her work Narotzky says that often academics look at the end result of production – the consumptive practice but neglect the production process (2005). As well as reviewing the processes of production, Narotzky promotes the provisioning approach as: “…a useful way to understand social differentiation, the construction of particular meanings and identities and the reproduction of the social and economic system as a whole” (2005:78).

A variant of provisioning is at the core of my thesis. I will use provisioning to underscore the discussion of the paths of consumer goods and consumers. This allows for the recognition of the various social and economic constraints and restraints that act upon my informants. Narotzky puts this succinctly as: “The provisioning approach follows the path of provisioning in order to understand how the content and the meaning of goods and services are produced and how, in turn, they produce social differentiation” (2005:81).

Narotzky summarises the provisioning approach in three parts as: 1. different paths for obtaining goods using diverse modes of provisioning, 2. different people and groups are positioned differently as to general ability to use market paths, 3. in non-market provisioning people have different abilities to use institutionalised formal provisioning (Eg: welfare payments or Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ), support in the New Zealand context), and informal provisioning methods (familial and friendship networks, ethnic ties, religious and political affinities) (2005:81). As Narotzky makes clear not everyone participates equally in patterns of consumption. Participation in opportunity shops is not for everyone. The complexities of patterns of consumption vary across cultural and social boundaries. What Narotzky has helped to clarify is that the paths of provisioning that my informants use are valid while at the same time being remarkably variable within the context of our capitalist society. “We cannot understand the
patterns of consumption, social relations in consumption to the construction of social meanings and forms of distinction and differentiation through consumption, if we do not address the complexity of the systems of provisioning as a whole” (Narotzky 2005:84).

Access to knowledge, variations in income levels, the literacy levels of people and health all relate to the paths provisioning takes. As will be explored in the thesis people’s access to alternative means of provisioning are impacted on by social relations, power inequalities and accessibility. All of these forces contribute to the provision of goods in the context of opportunity shops. Within an anthropological framework the provisioning approach is exactly what I need to be able to discuss the impacts of larger social issues on opportunity shops.

2.4 Places of consumption.

There are a variety of physical settings that are used for shopping. In this research I have chosen very specific sites of consumption. Opportunity shops are charity based sites provisioned by donations and usually operated volunteers. These places of consumption vary from normal retail shops, other forms of second hand sites and shopping malls. What follows is a small consideration on the literature surrounding the spaces of consumption.

Slater (1993) looked at the market place from the 1800’s through to the 1980’s. This time frame meant Slater was able to consider how these sites changed in appearance and in economic and cultural utility. Slater clearly distinguishes between the market as an abstract economic concept and a market place as “contained and bounded social space” (Slater 1993:204). Slater further contends that the space of the market and the economic market are entwined to define the value of commodities – both economically and socially. Slater describes early market places as being spaces of social interaction as well as consumption (1993). In direct opposition to this he suggests modern markets appear to be impersonal places where anonymity seems to be assumed and to some degree, a prerequisite for shopping (Slater 1993). One of his main contentions is that advertising is used to push society towards: “Economic reproduction of an autonomous culture through the market has been replaced by the market as a tool for the cultural reproduction of the capitalist mode of production” (Slater 1993:189).
Even within the context of second hand sites this has a resonance. Advertising has become a major tool within the sphere of the “op shop”. The changes that have occurred in opportunity shops during the course of the thesis mark an increase in the appropriation of “cultural reproduction” as Slater terms it (1993:189). Slater has provided a very concise reading of the changes in normal retail. I will adjust this to “fit” to the sphere of the second hand retail site.

Gregson and Crewe (2003) review three distinct and distinctive sites of second hand consumption in the United Kingdom. They consider the geographic space and social placing of retro stores, car boot sales and charity shops (2003). The changing spaces of the sites are a part of my thesis. As Gregson and Crewe view the three second hand sites as separate with different motivations for existing, I can utilise their research to fit my own research aims. It is interesting to note the occurrence of specific retro shops and regular car boot sales within the Dunedin context.

“A concern with second-hand however means that, for us consumption remains –at least in part- about the relations between people and things” (Gregson and Crewe 2003:10).

Gregson and Crewe focus was on the distinctions between the spaces of consumption, specifically: “… charity shops incursion into High Street sites of retail sale” (2003:44-45). They attribute this behaviour to the economic decline of the 1980s in the UK. Given that New Zealand is in the midst of an economic recovery of its own due to the worldwide recession of 2008 perhaps this trend may eventuate in NZ/Aotearoa. The economic consequences of events far closer to home such as the September 2010 and February 2011 earthquakes in Christchurch have already impacted on the provision of goods within second hand sites in Dunedin, as discussed in chapter five.

Gregson and Crewe (2003) define how retro and charity shops differ from normal retail sites thus: “...both attempt to inscribe very different premises of exchange into retail space.” [and] “Furthermore, both assume that the principles of exchange established in the first cycle will transfer un-problematically to these spaces” (Gregson and Crewe 2003:52). These attempts at normalising second hand retail have some challenges and professionalization of the sites is one way to try and mediate the changes.
Gregson and Crewe go on to discuss what they term “professionalization” (2003:75), a move that mimics the spatial presentation and layout of normal retail in charity shops. They query whether the distinctions between first and second hand retailing can be erased and go on to debate the appropriateness of using mass market and mass consumption representational strategies for this particular form of exchange (Gregson and Crewe 2003:76-77). This in turn ties back to what Slater had to say about advertising and its role in the consumer market (1993). Given that charity shops are unable to control their means of production – (donation), it will be interesting to view the marketing strategies that the sites in Dunedin use to encourage sales. Marketing is used within all forms of retail, but in the specific instance of charity shops within New Zealand I will address how a sense of community and charitable-ness is conveyed by the marketing employed. This text has been particularly helpful in providing an alternative and comparative analysis of differing sites of second cycle retail. In relation to the goods that flow through the sites Gregson and Crewe see consumption as the: “... continuous and circuitous nature of meaning creation” “The significance of second hand is the goods can be ‘cast off’ and ‘cast out’, but also that they are locked into endless cycles of re-enchantment” (2003:111-113).

I have found this text to be an invaluable resource. Gregson and Crewe (2003) have helped me to clarify my own study and validated second hand retail as a topic of study. Gregson and Crewe (2003), although geographers, have completed a rigorous study of the three types of second hand retail in England. As my own research has a much narrower perspective I hope to utilize their wider findings to make better sense of the place of opportunity shops within the Dunedin context.

2.5 Consumers and culture

Consumer culture refers to the study of the relationship between individuals and things. In this section I will discuss a variety of studies that reveal the practices behind everyday shopping. How do people negotiate buying within their economic limitations, and their desires to obtain certain objects? How does the desire to participate in the modern forms of leisure (shopping), have repercussions even on those with little economic capital.

Ditmar (1992) suggests that our evaluations of other’s identity, by their ability to consume, are symbolic. The argument Dittmar posits is that changes in the construction of individual identity have occurred since the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. Before the revolution
people’s identities were “ascribed” in relation to kinship ties. After the industrial changes people began to “achieve” their social identities through the acquisition of possessions (1992:12). This change in the social evaluation of one’s status is still relevant today. The acquisition of goods is, arguably, even more embedded into today’s economic climate. Even within the confines of a Global Financial Recession, and the associated tightening of economic belts that is bemoaned daily by market analysts, we are still defined by our ability to shop. As Dittmar suggests we cannot decipher the meaning of possessions without a shared basis of beliefs and values. Further to this Dittmar says an investigation into the values and beliefs cannot take place outside the fundamental triad of self, other and material object (1992:9). At the basis of the thesis is the participation in an economy dependent on gifts of material possessions. This gift is followed by the reinvention of the gift into a commodity or material object that then becomes the possession of another. The combination of consumer based status and the reinvention of object and self-identity correlates to inform a new of study.

Contemporary research into the place of consumption and the associated financial conditions needed to participate in modern consumer based society has been very well supported by prior research into the genre of consumption studies. Lunt and Livingston (1992) considered cross generational attitudes towards credit and debt and how these influence modern consumer practices. Part of the thesis is to consider how the recycling ethic has been promoted as a marketing tool within second hand markets. Lunt and Livingston’s research (1992) generated information on the old fashioned values of new versus old in relation to commodities. What can be seen in modern capitalist society is the acceptance of personal debt, in the form of hire purchase agreements, credit cards and personal bank loans as being normal (Lunt and Livingston 1992: 36-40). The perception that personal debt is acceptable has relevance to my study as most shoppers in the second hand context rely on cash as the main form of purchase, not the delayed gratification or payment inherent in current capitalism. So the normalisation of increasing personal debt can affect shopping in opportunity Shops, as this is an alternative to increasing debt.

Bocock views consumers and consumption practises as marking the movement from a capitalist society based on the production of goods to a consumer based society. The consumption of goods is the end process of making money “... the concept of “consumption” marked an important theoretical move away from seeing the mode of production as the major, even sole, determinant
of how modern societies have been shaped and of the ways in which they have operated” (1992:120).

The mass of material consumer goods available offers many chances to create an individual sense of self within the larger community. The act of second hand provisioning for clothing and essential household items is a step further away from the means of production. The second hand market is a direct result of this consumerism. The detritus from mass consumerism is what opportunity shops sell. The participation in second hand acquisition specific to opportunity shops is itself removed from capitalism but seemingly intertwined with a sense of community and the popular “green” ethic of recycling or the more fashionable “up-cycling”. The role of consumers in second hand consumption appears to be an alternative form of acquisition. Bocock argues that a: “spending ethos of modern consumerism” is symbolized by the “process of identity constructed around patterns of consumption” (Bocock 1992:122-123).

Bocock sees the role of consumption as an end. First cycle consumption is the beginning of an dissatisfaction with good. This dissatisfaction appears to be embedded within our consumer based society. Even within the confines of my research into second hand consumption there is emphasis on repeat purchasing patterns. Rather than being concerned with satisfying consumptive wants, the value of an object is used as a reason to keep buying. Value is then in the de-valuation of the good. This spending is changed to incorporate the idea of thrift and the patterns of consumption are the skills used in the search for a bargain.

Lury considers “consumer culture” to be a distinctive form of material culture: being the relationship between people and things. Lury (1996:3) claims that the process of consumption is often seen as the end of the production process. This idea has been discussed earlier in this chapter and appears to shape many discussions on the topic of consumption practices. Lury argues for studies that can follow this process as a continuation of the unified cycles of production, consumption and re-appropriation. This thesis is an attempt to look at all three cycles. Lury’s basis for this discussion is in her research into the art culture system. Our self-identity, she argues is best understood in relation to our possessions and as a possession itself, that can be varied, changed and re-arranged constantly (1996:8). Lury does acknowledge an inequality in that individuals have different levels of access to the same cultural or aesthetic knowledge: “…cultural drenching said to be characteristic of modern consumption does not make us all equally wet” (Lury 1996:53).
Lury’s specific research was in the world of art culture being defined as the visual arts, literature, music, radio, film or television. Historically these institutions form the basis of practices, beliefs and institutions that organised the production and consumption of cultural goods (Lury 1996:53). Further to this Lury argues that consumer society has a pre-requisite: consumer attitude or culture. Lury argues that this is related to the consumer’s social standing. I do not argue with this but my research suggests that consumers can contest their presentation of self in society within the realms of second hand consumption (1996). Lury’s research was firmly situated within capitalist society although she does acknowledge the variables involved in all forms of shopping: “... the use or appropriation of an object is often than not both a moment of consumption and production, of undoing and doing, of destruction and construction” (Lury 1996:1, italics in original depicted by underlining). Lury writes of the relationships between people and things but her work on second cycle consumption is limited. I can utilise her research however in the discussion of moments of re-appropriation in the context of opportunity shops. Lury’s (1996) work is comparable with Narotzky’s (2005) later work as both discuss the variations of access available to consumers.

Bauman says contemporary capitalist society is a specifically consumer culture, where the act of consumption is the primary motivation, versus production being the primary motivation for social life (1999:24). This changes how we are defined within society, largely as economically motivated consumers that promote a capitalist economy by shopping. “ The roads to self-identity, to a place in society, to life lived in a form recognizable as that of meaningful life, all require daily visits to the market place” (Bauman 1999:26).

I do not argue with Bauman’s premise that consumption is at the heart of current capitalism. Bauman wrote this before the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008 took place but his discussion has implications for a global recovery. As he argues a: “... consumer led recovery equates to the consumers’ desire to buy on credit is strong enough to outweigh their fear of insolvency” (Bauman 1999:26 italics in original underlined). Bauman also argues that active consumption was a “...role once performed by work in linking together individual motives, social integration and systemic reproduction, has now been assigned to consumer activity” (Bauman 1999:27).
The formation of a consuming self is not limited as Bauman suggests to those who have the fiscal ability to shop in main stream retail. Opportunity shoppers have the task of either buying clothes that don’t mark them out as having to buy second-hand or marking themselves outside of the normal consumption by deliberately buying clothes that present them as alternative or different. This distinction will be made more salient in my discussion of the sites’ consumers. What is negated by Baums’ (1999), jaundiced view of capitalism and the “new” consumer directed society is that reactions against mass consumption still take place. My argument is that they do so within the confines of second-hand consumption. This form of consumption may be a conscious form of “anti-consumerism”.

In the research of a second hand form of consumption the lack of spending is the more valuable form of identity. A “good” shopper finds bargains, and “good deals”. These shoppers provide a sense of those less well-endowed economically doing well. The “reading” of clothing and how we each present ourselves is a clear marker of our social standing. In converse to what Bauman (1999) suggests, the involvement in consumption practices may well be based on your consumptive ability to spend, but lack of this ability does not necessarily mean an exclusion from shopping. Perhaps this then is actually a reinforcement of what he says, that we will consume at any cost?

Where and how we participate in consumption seems to be the over-riding way we socially regulate ourselves in modern capitalist societies. The participation in alternative shopping markets takes us away from the first cycle of consumption and production and places the behaviours and attitudes we have to clean, or dirty, new or used in a different context. Within the confines of my study there appears to be a sub category of ownership rituals defined by the washing, re-making or re-using of objects out of their original intended use. Millers’ (1998) study of ritualistic behaviour in mundane provisioning has some resonance within the context of second hand consumption and the forms of rituals undertaken.

Within the research on capitalist consumption there appears to be a lack of attention given to the significance of the second-hand market. I stress this as distinct from other forms of acquisition such as the black market, and indeed first cycle shopping. The literature available allows for a firm basis in first cycle economic life but does not allow for the many reasons’ and behaviours evident in second-hand, specifically opportunity shopping. The consumptive practices involved in second hand retail are often variations of those used in first cycle.
The objects that make up the second hand world are the left over detritus of mass consumerism. In the context of opportunity shops they are the bones that make up the skeleton of a rich and varied form of shopping. This can be attested to by the provisioning of goods that have not actually outlived their use –value, this can also be seen by the donation of goods that have still their label tags from the first purchase. The reasons people donate are many and varied, a child out growing clothes, a shift in location or circumstances or a change in body shape are some. The reasons for donation are as varied as the reasons to utilise the shops.

The world of opportunity shopping does have its own regimes of value for the charities that require donations in order to work. The movement towards a more standardized and professional environment within the shops themselves at once promotes the sites as valid places to shop and encourages the view of opportunity shops as closer to normal retail. In reality this can make the distinctions between first and second cycle shopping more apparent. The movement from an objective of fundraising to profit making is clear in the case study of Dunedin sites. A clear distinction remains between the charity shop as a place to fossick and find treasures and those sites where the treasures have been found and displayed.

What has been shown by the process of reading are the many and varied ways that consumption, gift, exchange and consumer behaviour attribute to our social behaviours, statuses and groups. I hope to reveal how these practices relate to opportunity shops in Dunedin.
Chapter Three: Research in practice

This chapter is a discussion of the research tools that I have used to collect my data. The historical component of my research is from a postal questionnaire\(^4\) and five case studies. My contemporary research was collected through five informal interviews with consumers and managers of the sites, and fieldwork notes obtained through participation in the shops and in the context of volunteering at one of the sites. I have used pseudonyms to maintain the privacy of my respondents. I received ethical approval from the Otago University Ethics Committee\(^5\) for both the historical questionnaire and the interview processes. I decided to write about the research processes individually in this chapter and then to present the results in the following chapter. The research process has been a continuous reframing of my research knowledge. The research itself has uncovered details of the practices within the sites and of the respondents this has led to a more holistic approach to the body of the thesis. I have formulated the results to provide refined answers to the many questions raised in the production of the thesis.

In order to decide where to start with the research and which tools to use I had to first acknowledge what I already knew about the sites. At the onset my knowledge was based on my own participation in the sites as a consumer and on observing my friend’s participation. I knew that the goods were mostly donated, that the shops had a volunteer workforce and that the monies raised where to provide social services. An intrinsic part of ethnographic research is the participation of the researcher in the process. Defining my-self as an “op shopper” and my participation in this led to both my time as a volunteer and to the people that became my informants. Both of which are integral to the collation of data. As a novice researcher I have at times found it hard to recognise that my knowledge of the subject is much broader than most. To me this has been part of the process, refining what I know with what I have been told, to compare and contrast what people say they do with what they actually do. There is a basic function of social science research, to uncover what has been hidden, sometimes in plain sight. A Miller puts it: “The anthropological task is often to show just how ordinary and mundane Mongolian break dancing or gatherer- hunters watching soap opera may have become in everyday experience” (1995:5). For the purpose of this research the subject matter is even less exotic - the mundane practice of shopping for second - hand goods.

\(^4\) appendix one
\(^5\) appendix two
I also utilised the services of another post-graduate student as my official photographer to depict the opportunity shops and the ways they represented themselves. This particular tool provides an insightful overview of the physical changes in the shops. I have included a handful of these photographs both historical and contemporary in my thesis.

As can be seen through the photographs this particular site has been repainted and the interior changed to present the site as closer to normative retail outlets.

“We as academics can strive for understanding and empathy through the study of what people do with objects, because that is the way the people that we study create a world of practice” (Miller 1998b:19). In this Miller (1998b) refers to the place of material culture as an academic field, separate from other studies. I will use the photographs to show how the objects are depicted within the sites. What cannot be seen is the re-valuation process the goods go through, for this I needed to talk with opportunity shoppers. I cannot but place my own research with Millers’ as the remains of material culture the detritus of contemporary everyday life are the basis of the thesis. The histories and trajectories of the material culture and the paths they have taken are a large consideration.
I have utilised my research in order to find an understanding of the practices and skills that are needed to function well in the environment of opportunity shops. I have collated my research data in a variety of ways. All of my research is based on qualitative processes allowing for a widely descriptive analysis of the ways people interact with the cultural remains of modern life.

As my thesis is embedded within social anthropology using a qualitative approach and research practices was appropriate. Uncovering the mundane aspects of everyday opportunity shopping has meant I have used a variety of data collection resources. I have considered the trajectories of the goods themselves and the socio-economic situations of the consumers in order to re-define opportunity shops as having specific roles within a capitalist economy. Narotzky has been helpful in her discussion on provisioning as a process (2005). A process I feel fits into my own area of research. “I want to stress the fact that provisioning is a complex process where production, distribution, appropriation and consumption relations all have to be taken into account and where history defines particular available paths for obtaining goods and services” (Narotzky 2005:78). The use of provisioning as a concept allows for the different relationships and ideas surrounding gifts and commodities, community and charity, thrift and value flows as a means of understanding the place of opportunity shopping. I take the provisioning concept further in the realm of opportunity shopping: my research then is on a process of complex and circuitous provisioning that involves not only the objects but the subjects (people) who participate in this consumption.

The use of the questionnaire as a starting point allowed me to incorporate changes in the broader scheme of the research. This was my first major research project and provided invaluable learning processes. When I came to the interviews I allowed for much more reflexive questioning style to allow my respondents more freedom to express themselves, rather than try and regulate their answers as I had done in the questionnaire. Using historical data in the thesis has meant I have been able to track the changes in the shops, these changes relate to the physical presentation of the sites and to the changes in the structure of the workers and the shoppers as well.

The descriptive list of the tools used does not negate the long hours needed to formulate a plan of attack of where to go to find and access information. All of the tools used are based in a social science interpretive paradigm where the researcher and researched are equal participants in the process. As my interest came from my participation in the sites I thought this appropriate. I needed to formulate a research plan that would encompass all of my questions and in the process
uncover relevant information. This was influenced greatly by the reading process, discovering what aspects of consumption and consumers had already been subject to anthropological study. Miller (1998a) and Clarke’s (1998) studies on mundane consumption, and Lunt and Livingstone’s (1992) use of a questionnaire all coloured my approach to my research. Appadurai (1986) and Kopytoff (1986), were both influential in the setting of the basic question. These books are presented in the previous chapter but deserve mention here because of their influence upon my research. Whilst I read on the roles of consumers and goods I also reviewed the literature on social science research processes.

I started the process by reading a body of social science literature that focused on commodities, gift exchange theory and consumers. I then located my own research questions in relation to providing a hybrid account of gift and commodity within opportunity shops. I used the vast array of literature available on both the consumption process and on social science research practices to find a way to “fit” my questions to the research process. I was greatly influenced by Appadurai (1986) and Kopytoff’s (1986) works and Miller (1998a) and Clarke’s (1998) research on mundane shopping practices. Amongst this literature I also found more questions that were relevant to my own work. How do the practices of thrift and treat fit into opportunity shopping?

What questions did I need to ask in order to answer my research aims? How would the research process define my thesis as a whole? Which paradigm should I focus on? What methods of data collection were relevant and vital questions in the formation of my own work? In order to reveal which research processes were best suited to my research I reviewed quantitative or qualitative research processes. I needed a framework which best suited my particular questions and allowed me to gain more information. I was very aware that my processes would all require co-operation from individuals, and that I had to tell their stories in order to solve my own questions. How could I corroborate my field work and observations with the questionnaire results and the interview data to provide an informative and accurate description of my thesis query – that opportunity shops are apart from capitalism, especially when my informants live within it. I needed, as all social scientists do, to fit my questions to my tools and my tools to my wider research goals. The overlapping processes of research seemed at times to contraindicate that I would ever be able to make sense of the data. The results I gathered were rich, varied and descriptive fitting well into the construction of qualitatively based research process. My research is firmly within the interpretative paradigm being that I see reality as being subjective in nature.
3.1 Quantitative versus qualitative

Quantitative research processes are deductive in nature, and based on the collection of data in a standardised format. The qualitative processes are more inductive in nature and allow for a collection of data that emphasises the variability in people’s responses and so allows for a more reflexive accounting of information. Being a social scientist in training I have focused on qualitative processes and formatting techniques that allow for a broader understanding of my topic. My research participants form the bedrock of my study and my own participation in opportunity shopping has allowed for a more informal flow of information. Recognising that I have insight into the behaviours of opportunity shoppers by being one myself I have placed myself well within the research process. Being part of the research process and not apart from it has led to respondents being more open with their personal experiences.

Initially I had to decide between quantitative research processes that allow for little reflexive movement in the implementation of the research design and qualitative processes. Quantitative research is data based and standardised to allow for analysis that is detached from the informants and the research object and environment. The emphasis in quantitative research is on the results that are achieved through data collection (Sarantokos 1998). Qualitative research in the interpretive paradigm alternately allows for participant led information to be uncovered. This form of research process also allows for the participant of the researcher in the community of the observed. In the interpretive paradigm researcher and researched are equally valued components of data collection. Qualitative research fitted my goals as a social scientist. In order to gain as much information as possible from the questionnaire I used open-ended questions that allowed for more information gathering. Ensuring that the questions were not too invasive but broad enough to allow for individual variability was a steep learning curve. I chose to use qualitative methods that allow form a more interpretive approach which can and did include research design, data collection and analysis happening concurrently and overlapping each other at all stages of the research process.

The interpretive paradigm is a set of propositions that explain how the world is perceived. The interpretive paradigm suggests that social participants assign their own meaning systems to events to make use of their social world (Sarantokos 1998:35). The combination of a qualitative approach and the interpretive paradigm means that my research process is more holistic. The interpretive framework in social science evaluates people and the cultural dynamics, assumptions
and perceptions that make up social interaction. Reality is internally experienced, socially constructed and subjective – no two people will experience the same event the same way nor have the same reasons for their social participation. The interpretive paradigm is seen as using common sense in order to make sense of actions, bring inductive means the researcher gains meaning by being in the respondents’ environment. This paradigm also considers that science is not value free thereby recognising that the researcher’s own values will impact on research process. By using an interpretive paradigm along with qualitatively based research methods I will access people’s attitudes towards and perceptions of the role of opportunity shops in Dunedin society. The use of qualitative research as the basis for the questionnaire design has meant that the respondents have the freedom to contribute more than yes and no answers. The purpose of the research is to broaden and deepen my knowledge of the practices that surround opportunity shopping. To uncover whether there is an “alternative” or “thrift” based consumption practice within the context of late modern capitalism. “Provisioning is also a useful way to understand social differentiation, the construction of particular meanings and identities and the reproduction of the social and economic system as a whole” (Narotzky 2005:78). Narotzky’s descriptive analysis of provisioning has allowed me to use this concept to decipher the paths that both people and goods take on the road to second hand shopping (2005).

3.2 Postal Questionnaire

The questionnaire was conducted in 2001 and is part of the historical content of the research. Being able to see how attitudes have changed over the last decade with concrete information from the past has led to a greater understanding of how economic and social ideas change over time. This has proved an invaluable resource in terms of the work involved in the initial production of the questionnaire and the results acquired. The questionnaire has remained a vital part of my research with answers formulated from it being carried over into my contemporary research practice. Any research that is based on society and people is fluid and evolving process, nothing remains static.

In preparation for the questionnaire ethical consent was granted from the University of Otago Ethics Committee. Consent forms and information sheets with an outline of my research aims

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6 appendix three
was included in the free post envelopes used in the distribution of the questionnaire. The decision to utilise this format for collection data was greatly influenced by Lunt and Livingstone (1992), Clarke (1998) and Miller (1998a) work with consumers.

I used a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches together in the organisation and formatting of a postal questionnaire. A pilot sample of the research was distributed to fellow post-graduate students, which enabled me to improve the “fit” of the questionnaire to the research project. The questionnaire was distributed to 384 domestic residences in 2001 in the South Dunedin area. Statistics New Zealand provided maps to access census mesh block areas to define the research parameters. The area was comprised of 11 mesh block and covered and area of 11 city blocks. The information for the mesh blocks was the 1996 census. I also used computer programme Super Map 3 to access demographic information. The questionnaire provided essential data in the uncovering of who shop in opportunity shops.

I first considered using a combination of qualitative and quantitative processes to format my postal questionnaire. The goal was to efficiently collect the data in order to start discovering the results. As the process of formatting continued I re-worked my tools to a much more social science friendly version of qualitative research. As my questionnaire was returned this was revealed as a most productive form of research as my respondents incorporated their own stories into the research. Uncovering my respondent’s ideas and attitudes toward second hand shopping and opportunity shopping in particular became a theme in the research. My research became firmly situated within qualitative research methods quickly - however I did utilise quantitative tools and adjusted them to the framework of my own research.

Sarantokos (1998) was used as the guideline for the design of the questionnaire. The questionnaire itself was a twenty-question format with four to five possible answers for each question. The questionnaire was designed around standardised quantitative research practices. It became more qualitative in nature when the questions were formatted so that respondents could include additional information from their own biographies. Information was collated as the questionnaires were returned. This involved an intricate coding process that was legible only to the researcher ensuring the anonymity of the respondents. The questionnaire had been distributed by hand with free post return envelopes included, a description of the research aims, my ethical

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7 appendix four
approval for the study and a consent form. The information collected related to age, gender, income bracket and the shopping practises of the respondents. Included were questions specifically relating to opportunity shopping. The basis for the development of the questionnaire was to provide a randomly selected overview of public opinion towards opportunity shopping. The questionnaire was anonymous, although some respondents put personal notes in the return envelopes. This was a surprising out-come that added depth to the research process. As happens in deductive research, because of the standardised form of the questionnaire it detached the informants from both the research object and environment. Use of a quantitative basis for this part of the research negated the ability to objectively uncover how or why the informants associate specific meanings to the material culture of opportunity shops. In this respect the use of quantitative methods ignored the fundamental triad between individual, object and other (Dittmar 1992:9). The personal notes included in the return envelopes illustrate how even quantitatively based research can be subverted by informants. A time period of one week was given between distribution and the final return date. This was to ensure collation of the data could occur quickly. A pilot sample of the research was distributed to fellow postgraduate students; this enabled me to improve the ‘fit’ of the questionnaire to the research project.

The return rate was expected to be rather low, as with most postal questionnaire, but ended up being surprisingly high with a return rate of 41.92% (161 returns). The nature of the research was to investigate the people and practices that are associated with opportunity shopping in Dunedin. Of the returns 137 or 85% answered in the affirmative to the over-arching question; did they participate in opportunity shopping?

The results from the questionnaire are used in the wider thesis to help decipher the place of opportunity shops in the contemporary context of capitalism. The historical questionnaire results have been supplemented by interviews, fieldwork notes and volunteering in one of the sites done between 2010 and 2012. The lessons learnt from the initial process have been carried forward into the other research processes.

3.3 Case studies

I used five case studies as part of the initial research process. These where all conducted as shopping expeditions with the informants in 2001, all but one of the participants still shop in
these sites. This would indicate then a continuous pattern of behaviours over time. The five case studies or “types” of opportunity shopper were based on Lunt and Livingstone’s (1992) research into intergenerational attitudes to consumption, debt and the individual. I have given my participants pseudonyms to ensure their privacy.

**Case study one: Alma**

This shopper was at the time a thirty-five year old married woman with a post-graduate degree. Alma had gone from having one full time job to being employed part time in two separate roles. With this change was a subsequent change in transportation use – instead of driving Alma had changed to walking into town. This meant she had to walk past and specific opportunity shop on her way to work, St Vincent de Paul on George Street. A consequence of the change in transportation was the window shopping Alma could do on her way to work, combined with more time to shop this led to more opportunity shopping. A decrease in income could also be related to Alma’s participation. Alma has continued to opportunity shop over the years and now takes advantage of the shops being open on the weekend to visit them since she has once again gone back to full time employment. Alma was representative of an opportunistic shopper, taking advantage of smaller work hours to find bargains. Alma is also an accomplished sewer so was able to purchase items with the view to fixing or amending them to suit her own purposes.

**Case study two: Gay**

Gay is also tertiary qualified with a Post Graduate qualification. At the time Gay was a twenty eight year old single woman. When I was doing my initial research Gay had gone from being a full time student to being full time employed. This impacted on her ability to participate in opportunity shopping. Gay had used opportunity shops in the past when a student to supplement her wardrobe. Gay viewed opportunity shopping as something you did as a student, prior to her student days, Gay worked fulltime. Restrictions where placed on her ability to participate in second-hand consumption due to the opening times of the opportunity shops.

**Case study three: Bronwyn**

This consumer was a thirty-year-old single mum, with one child, a full time student with part time work. Bronwyn’s opportunity shopping has become part habit and part ritual process. Like shopper two, Bronwyn did not participate in this form of consumption until she became a
student. Lack of financial resources has meant that she has used opportunity shopping as an alternative way to clothe herself and her child, allowing for more money to be spent on mundane items, such as food at the local café and books. Like the first two case studies Bronwyn had a degree and was working towards a post-graduate qualification. Bronwyn considered herself to be a “professional op shopper”, with at least four excursions a week into opportunity shops. Bronwyn viewed this as a form of continuous browsing that allowed her to pick and choose good quality clothes for herself and her child. By repeatedly going in to the sites it was easier to assess what was new and therefore to be able to spend a small amount of time in each site as each visit was about twenty minutes in duration.

**Case study four: Eight**

Eight was actually a family of eight on a low income, they were reliant on family support alone to feed and clothe the entire family. The family have a very strong religious faith and this affects all that they do. All of the family, except for the two youngest children participated in opportunity shopping. The family used bicycles as their means of transport. For practical reasons then only small amounts of shopping could be done at a time. They relied on a large network of friends to help if they bought any large items that needed to be delivered, such as furniture. Most of the provisioning for this family was done in opportunity shops due to the financial restraints they faced. The family quite frequently found “bargains” this was as much to do with the expansion of time spent opportunity shopping as “luck”. Within this family money was a scarce resource so participation in opportunity shops was one way to cut down costs. The family used “specials” as strategic way to provide food for them – bicycling to the other end of town to get item on special offer. Even when the older children started to work part time they still participated in opportunity shopping for clothing. The provisioning of goods was a large part of everyday life for this family. The use of bicycles meant that the food shopping had to be done regularly as the baskets on the bicycles where small. The children were all home schooled and both parents were tertiary educated. Provisions for use in learning activities were also found in opportunity shops. The family still participates in opportunity shopping, although some of the older children have now left home I continue to see them participating in opportunity shopping.
Case study five: April

This shopper was retired woman from a middle class background; April was the only one of the participants not to have a tertiary education. April participates in opportunity shopping only when she is away from her hometown. April has the view that she should not participate in opportunity shopping, as she can afford not to. This is highlighted best by April parking her new model car around the road from an opportunity shop so that people wouldn’t judge her participation in the site. April used to tell her friends that she purchased any goods she did purchase from opportunity shop in a sale. This feeling of being too well off to participate in opportunity shops was a discussion I had many times with volunteers in the sites. The majority of people I had this discussion with were in the over sixty-age group.

The case studies gave me an overall starting point within which to place my data. When and how the participants came to practice of opportunity shopping appeared to be dictated by which stage of life they were at. As the majority of my case studies were students I assumed this was in part to do with the economic restrictions this placed upon them. As is shown by the following discussion on my informal interview participants economic factors and life stages do play a part in both the opportunity shopping undertaken and the reasons why and how this is done.

3.4 Informal Interviews

A large part of the data collection was acquired through the interview process. I interviewed five people in individual and informal settings. I have given all of the informant’s pseudonyms to protect their identities. Three of the informants are managers of different sites and two are consumers.

**Interview one Peggy** is a stay at home married mother of two, age 40, originally from Scotland via San Francisco, opportunity shopper and artist and baker. Peggy had lived in New Zealand for five years at the time of the interviews. Peggy has opportunity shopped since she was a teenager living in Scotland.

**Interview two Tessa** is the full time, paid manager of one of the shops and has always participated in opportunity shopping.
**Interview three Nancy** is a long term volunteer at one of the sites; she has been “working” there for 14 years. Nancy makes most of the decisions relating to when the other volunteers work and rosters the sales they have. Nancy has always participated in opportunity shopping.

**Interview four Kate** is a busy married mother of four; she now works full time and only occasionally now gets time to participate in opportunity shopping, uses the sites more now than previously.

**Interview five Hannah** is the paid manager of one of the newer sites; Hannah has always participated in opportunity shopping to provide for her, now grown, children.

Field notes were also acquired through conversations with other opportunity shoppers: Kitty, a university graduate, Kat a woman who has also opportunity shopped through necessity and Candy a retired woman who has recently started to use opportunity shops as a form of recreational.

I “found” my respondents in various ways, either I approached them in the shops they worked in or as in the case of Peggy I approached her as she shopped. As can be seen from the descriptions above all of my respondents have participated in opportunity shopping for long periods of time. I used a semi-structured outline of questions to ask, this allowed for the interviews to become more informant led. This in turn allowed for a depth of information to surface. The interviews were used to uncover knowledge about the mechanisms of the business operations and the overall structures of the wider organisations in which the op shops exist. In the case of the consumers these interviews were used to collect data on generational shopping patterns, and skills the consumers utilised in the shops. The interviews were valuable in the process of uncovering the meanings associated with the values of thrift in shopping, and what socio-economic backgrounds are represented in the consumers of opportunity shops. What was uncovered were the larger relationships between the charity based opportunity shops in the Dunedin context.

The interview process was extensive with collation and transcribing of the interviews being an overwhelming task. The process of transcribing meant however that I gained a deeper insight to the interview process. The processes of social science research practises within the thesis have uncovered a much broader sense of the local community and the relationships between and
within sites and consumers. A great deal of insightful information was found and is included within the larger body of the thesis and my conclusions. Utilising interviews in the research processes meant I could, and did, gather data of historical significance. All of the interviews were conducted with women. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the over representation of women in these sites as managers, volunteers and consumers. There are a very few men who do work in these sites and men definitely participate in the consumption but the world of charity is a woman’s world. The fact that women are both volunteers in and consumers of these sites has many contributing factors. I do not wish to undermine feminist study but neither do I wish to discuss this in a feminist light. From contributions of information from informants I have found the over representation of women to be because of a variety of reasons. Women who work within these sites tend to be older (retirement age, 64 years); a great deal of value is put on the contribution of volunteers in these sites. This is a matter I discuss later in the thesis.

3.5 Field work notes

I have used fieldwork notes to complement my interviews. Managers, volunteers and participants in second hand consumption have been more than willing to share information and knowledge. Sometimes the respondents approached me if they were aware of my study or in the case of two particular informants they continuously up-dated me on the inner workings of the site they worked in, Charles and Camilla, where very helpful and open with the knowledge they have. The use of fieldwork notes has meant my research has a depth that covers all aspects of second hand consumption. I utilised the tools of field notes when volunteering as part of the thesis research process. In doing so I gathered information that would otherwise have not been visible. This process has been influential in the way my work has progressed, in times in response to conversations or observations made. Use of field notes in this research has meant an uncovering of additional material in particular from the volunteers in the sites. I have at all times been open about my interest in the sites and have received further information in this way. The contribution of my fieldwork notes to the research is influential to the overall outcomes of the thesis. Being able to observe and then collate my findings quickly has proven the value of fieldwork notes. Supplementing informal interviews, when respondents have offered more information as a result of the initial interview process has led to a greater understanding to the topic.
Included in the fieldwork notes was the ability to watch Orphans Aid International developing as a charity shop from its inception. I was also able to observe the same processes in respect to the Charity Barn shop on Kaikorai Valley Road. Both of these sites were created in November of 2010, they have evolved quite differently – this has given me an even greater insight to the practice of opportunity shops. Both sites are based within international charitable giving and represent non-local charities.

**Summary**

In my attempt to answer the question of where exactly opportunity shopping “fits” in relation to capitalist driven consumerism I have used various types of research in my information gathering. This has included an extensive process of understanding how people relate to this form of shopping. A large part of my thesis is based on the differences between gifts and commodities. What was uncovered during my research was a hybrid form of these two distinctive types of good. When does a good then become a commodity and vice versa? How people relate and value these two separate forms of good is the basis for the research questions. The differing values given to and expected by consumers in second-hand charity sites, is very different to those of first cycle retail sites. I have found that even “new” products are expected to be well below retail price in charity shops. Highlighting this expectation are the consumers who believe that charity shops take advantage of poorer people because the goods are donated and the shop will make money on them regardless of what they charge (Kat field notes June 2012). This expectation of cheaper items in charity shops was a constant theme in conversations with other consumers. Importantly this aversion to what are considered to be too high prices and the presentation of specific op shops as upmarket angered another respondent (Kitty field notes 4.8.10). These practices are deemed as not charitable and against the ethic of opportunity shopping. One respondent; Kitty believes that the movement towards upmarket shops create an unfair advantage to wealthier shoppers, specifically those who are looking for distinctly retro items. Kitty believes that this takes away from the “hunting” practices of those on low incomes to clothe them in a fashionable way. Kitty (field notes 4.8.10) presents herself as being alternatively but well dressed. Both of these consumers are on fixed incomes but are from different socio-economic backgrounds. That both of these respondents have similar objections to what has been called the professionalization of charity sites would indicate a wider dissatisfaction with this process.
(Gregson and Crewe 2003). The use of a qualitative process meant I could discover whether these were widely held beliefs or not.

Utilising several forms of social science data gathering means I have had access to a greater variety of information. The postal questionnaire gave me access to a large number of responses. This means I can confidently talk of broader social issues such as economic constraints in relation to opportunity shops. Results from the questionnaire form the historical part of my research process. The inclusion of informal interviews has allowed for deeper understanding of the community networks between these sites. The interviews also gave me specific areas to focus my research on. Why people choose to consume in these sites was uncovered with reference to intergenerational shopping practices. These processes have enabled me to firmly situate my thesis in the context of qualitative research. The variations in people’s attitudes to opportunity shopping meant at times a reworking of my own research question. How to get people to divulge their own practices sometimes means making them aware of them. The thesis is in the end a consideration of consuming behaviours. It is the study of what is perceived to be an informal and alternative form of acquisition. The how and why of these specific practices is revealed in the research process.

The practices of knowledge gathering in the thesis represent a large investment of time and effort. All of the utilised forms of data collection required me to address a lack of knowledge of these techniques. This I am sure is part of the process of researcher being part of the process. What has been gained is a wider understanding of the relationships between and within the sites and mundane shopping practices that are applicable only to opportunity shops. What may not have been conveyed well enough in this chapter is the networking between opportunity shoppers, even if they are personally unknown to one and another? I have frequently been brought in to discussions of “random” other shoppers, to discuss whether or not a piece of clothing or item is suitable. This practice does take place within first cycle shopping but is generally between the retail assistant and the consumers, as part of the shopping “experience”. Within opportunity shops the purchase of a bargain tends to be an event that is celebrated by other consumers as well, albeit sometimes with an edge of disgruntlement. The socialisation that occurs within the practice of opportunity shopping appears to be specific to these types of localities. Anecdotally this has been reported by others who regularly opportunity shops. I conclude from this then that opportunity shops are not just places to find bargains but also to participate in social interactions.
I have utilised the results collated from the various forms of information gathering techniques in the larger body of the thesis.
Chapter Four: The Evolution of Opportunity Shops

4.1 How Opportunity Shops have evolved.

This chapter is an overview of the history of opportunity shops within Dunedin in the last decade. I will also include a discussion of the introduction and use of the Internet in the sphere of second-hand consumption as a contrast to opportunity shopping. Opportunity/charity shops began as a means to help lower income people provide for families or as a way to raise funds for specific charities. In most respects this is still the case as opportunity shops provide a second life to goods that have outlived their ‘usefulness’ to their initial owners. As discussed elsewhere in the thesis the place of opportunity shops within late modern capitalism has changed dramatically during the last ten years. These changes are discussed with reference to the Dunedin context in this chapter as I look at each shop individually. As this thesis has taken place over the last decade I am uniquely placed to have observed and recorded changes in the place and space of opportunity shops within Dunedin during this period. The thesis was initially formulated when considering the differences between sites of capitalist profit driven consumption and charity based second-hand sites. The basis for the study resides in the gifting of goods. The underlying premise for opportunity shops is that of provisioning from donors who have no recourse for payment. The gifting of time is a cornerstone of the opportunity shop with all of the shops having voluntary labour. The gift is then the starting point of this form of second-hand consumption.

The sites studied were the three Salvation Army Family shops, the two St Vincent de Paul shops, Presbyterian Support’s “Op Shop” and “Shop on Carroll”, “Restore” (a Habitat for Humanity shop with local charitable connections), the Corso shop, Butterflies the local cancer hospice shop and Charity Barn; (a shop with international fundraising connections), along with “Orphans Aid Shop” (a New Zealand based International charity shop). In the course of the initial research it was discovered that these sites were created as a way to increase funds available to the different organizations, a way of providing for community projects as well as providing some payment for staff. Each section contains the details of where the sites are, what charities they are associated with, how they work and how they have changed during the course of the research. This will lead to the discussion of what these changes mean for the charity shops as a group. A map is included to show the geographic location of the shops in relation to each other.
Figure 3: Map of Opportunity Shops. (http://www.wises.co.nz/l/dunedin/#c/-45.873816/170.508928/14)

4.2 Salvation Army

4.2.1 Location

The Salvation Army stores have been present in Dunedin since the 1960s. There are currently three separate sites in Dunedin - South Dunedin, Princess Street and North Dunedin. All three sites have moved premises during the course of the research. In reality this means a very public presence for the Salvation Army in Dunedin as all sites are on main arterial roads in and out of the main business area. This prominent positioning would seem to be in contrast to the perception of charity shops as run-down buildings in out of the way places. The shops are all in places close to the main bus routes throughout town. This means that lower income people can bus easily between all three of these sites. Lack of personal transport is not a bar to participation in this form of consumption.

4.2.2 Operations

Managers run the sites individually although they are under the same institutional banner. The Salvation Army sites are all associated with the local Salvation Army Corps and raise funds to continue the work of the Salvation Army both within Dunedin and in the wider community. The Salvation Army provides counselling, addiction and educational services, as well as work opportunities for young people. The sites are open Monday to Saturday 9am until 5pm.

These charity retail sites are presented differently to retail chains and represent the personalities of the managers in such a way that does not usually happen in normal retail chains. In part this is to do with the provision of goods. As with most opportunity shop sites there is no control over what kind and quality of goods are provided. The displays in the windows and indeed the spatial layout of the shops are the responsibility of individual managers. All of the Salvation Army sites utilize voluntary labour. Over the course of the last decade all three sites have changed their physical location, with improvement and enlargement of the sites being the motivation behind this. The individual managers decide the frequency and length of sales within the sites, and the site managers seem to retain their positions for some time. In one site (North East Valley) the same manager has been there since 2001. The sites are named “Sally Army Family Stores” and benefit from a national advertising campaign. These sites tend to present themselves as “old fashioned” opportunity sites, with a large variety of goods available to fossick through. All of the sites have regular shoppers and the managers appear to know some by name. This is common
within all of the opportunity shops in Dunedin. The social aspect of the sites is indicated with this behaviour; in direct contrast to normative retail sites where relationships between consumers and retailers is not a major factor in purchasing. These relationships between consumers and workers or volunteers constitute an important aspect of second hand shopping.

4.2.3 Changes

The three Salvation Army Stores in Dunedin all have been internally revamped and the one on Princes Street is currently increasing its size by utilizing a nearby site that had previously displayed furniture for sale (field notes January 2012). This change is a direct result of a need for more space for the actual work of the Salvation Army. All three sites have increased the prices they charge, reflecting the movement to profit rather than fund raising. The Princes Street site has warehouse sales at other venues, and all use the nationally run television campaigns to receive donated goods as well as drop offs. Drop offs are items left outside the doorways of sites or literally dropped off by donors during the course of business. With the movement into the newest space the Princess Street shop now has a larger furniture area. The furniture area is at the rear of the new site, but is spatially separated – you have to leave the new shop and walk around to the back of the larger building. Although consumers can purchase directly from this site there is no eftpos machine and only hand written receipts are available. The manager checks in on this site throughout the business day.

4.3 Presbyterian Support

4.3.1 Location

There are currently two Presbyterian Support shops in Dunedin and an associated one in Mosgiel. For the purposes of the research I have included a reference to the Mosgiel site but it is not part of the larger thesis.

The first of the sites is “The Op Shop” and has been in St Andrew Street since 1972. This is the original site. This shop is well within the main business area of Dunedin being in very close proximity and within walking distance of several car parking building and the main bus routes. The establishment of the second Presbyterian Support op shop the “Shop on Carroll” has
increased the profile of Presbyterian Support and increased the money raised in Dunedin and Otago. The “Shop on Carroll”, which is on Carroll Street was opened in December 2006, and is marketed as having “garments and collectables”. The Carroll Street shop is considerably further from the main retail area and promotes itself as a destination shop, rather than one you would pop into as you pass. This adds to the marketing practices that are evident with the shop. The “Shop on Carroll” site is the front of the warehouse storage site for the Presbyterian Support groups’ donated goods. The “Shop on Carroll” site is operated as separate from the Family Works “Op Shop” and has different “branding” to accentuate this. The second site is distinctive amongst the second hand sites in Dunedin as it is more formally presented along first cycle retail lines or more correctly as charity retail. The “Shop on Carroll” is also presented with more formal marketing strategies, with specifically designed labelling of the shop and goods within it. This site promotes itself with clearly visible marketing awards in the local business awards at the counter area and is presented as an up-market “vintage” site. This site was introduced as a way to increase the revenue for Presbyterian Support providing second hand goods with “first class service” (field notes Deidre 17.6.11).

4.3.2 Operations

The shops are run by the Otago Presbyterian Support organisation and are therefore based within a Christian ethos of charity. A paid manager and assistant managers run the sites. Voluntary staff is present at each site, although at the Carroll Street site they are working out the back in the warehouse area, not within view of the consumers. The volunteers are rostered groups from local parishes, linking the religious community to the business of fund raising. The sites are open 10am until 5pm during the week and on Saturdays.

The target market is different for this site but the workers are quick to defend the larger prices by saying they still cater for “needy” clients. This is important given that the site is very much a fund -raiser for the work of Presbyterian Support in the larger community. This would appear to be indicative of the increasing professionalization of second hand charity sites as a means of increasing funds for specific groups. In Dunedin, as Gregson and Crewe (2003:42) have noted in the United Kingdom, the fundamental layout and physical space of charity shops tries to take the spaces closer to first cycle retail. The changes brought about by physical and spatial changes are the manifestations of the changes in perceptions about opportunity shops both from within the sites and publicly among the consumers. These changes are the physical representations of how
the managers of the sites and the larger social organisations they belong to are trying to increase the “fund raising” or profit of the sites. By trading on the recycling ethic, using “vintage” as a much more up-market way of meaning second hand, the sites are trying to minimalize the difference between new and second hand.

4.2.3 Changes

At the time of the initial research there was only one Presbyterian Support shop open and a mobile shop (bus). This organisation gives an insightful overview of the process of ‘professionalization’ in process. The original shop has been revamped internally and externally, with plastic bags replaced with re-useable bags covered in positive messages promoting opportunity shopping (figure 4).

![Figure 4: Re-useable bag from Presbyterian Support](image)

These bags were only available for purchase from the “Op Shop” site. The changes evident are part of a larger move to blur the lines between first and second cycle consumption. Before the introduction of these bags, plastic grocery bags were used for goods bought from opportunity shops in. A practical reason behind the marketing of the new bags, which could be bought
separately from an op shop purchase, was the initiative by supermarkets a few years ago to charge between 5 – 10 cents per plastic bag. This has declined and opportunity shops are once again advertising for recycled plastic bags to hold sold items.

The opening and marketing of the “Shop on Carroll” marks a definitive move into the sphere of retail charity. The professional presentation of both the site and its staff is distinct from the “Op Shop”. Although both sites provide income for Presbyterian Support in Otago they each have specific target markets. This organisation has taken on the movement to a professional form of charity where fundraising is re-defined into raising profit (Gregson and Crewe 2003:41-42). The extension of opening hours to include weekends is a recent change, following the seven-day shopping week that has become part of normal retail.

4.4 Saint Vincent de Paul

4.4.1 Location

![Image](image.png)

Figure 5: The Wednesday Shop, (2001), depicting the juxtaposition between charity and religion

There are two Saint Vincent de Paul sites currently in Dunedin. The larger of the two has a prominent position on George Street, close to the main retail area, the university and the polytechnic. The second site is in South Dunedin and occupies a much smaller space. The George Street site has been open since 1960 (field notes 29.3.12). The Saint Vincent de Paul sites have reduced from three to two, with the closure of the ‘Wednesday’ shop after 2001. This shop
was positioned in a side street near to the university area and held a collection of both furniture and clothing items and was the only outlet for furniture sales. Neither of the current sites sells furniture. They have been redecorated inside during the last ten years. Prices have increased at these shops with the South Dunedin site still maintaining lower prices than that on George St. Change can also be reflected through the ages of the volunteers which has decreased, with younger women volunteering. Through observation in the sites all of the volunteers seem to take ‘ownership’ of the shop and their role within the choice and placement of items on display. This represents a sense of being a part of the shop ‘life’ itself.

4.4.2 Operations

The sites are open for different hours with the George Street site open for longer hours than in South Dunedin. The St Vincent de Paul sites are run by the Catholic Church and as such have a religious basis. They have overall managers but are staffed by volunteers and the sites are independent of one another. A marked difference between these sites and others is the lack of an onsite manager. Volunteers are always on hand to help customers but the manager is only available if asked for. The shops are presented differently with the South Dunedin site being much smaller than the larger George Street site. The workers decide the layout of the sites. The larger site provides food bank parcels to those in need and has people self-referring or coming in after being sent by WINZ (Work and Income New Zealand, the state’s social welfare agency). These sites have a long history within Dunedin and as the George Street shop is close to the university it is always busy. The students are a large part of both the clientele and the beneficiaries of the site. This is reflected in the collection of white sheets throughout the year specifically for the “Toga Parties”. The “Toga Parties” are an event associated with “Orientation Week” at Otago University in the beginning of each academic year. The variance between the two sites can be viewed through different prices at each site for similar items. The South Dunedin shop almost always has cheaper goods. This may reflect the location and clientele as South Dunedin is predominantly a lower socio-economic area. The autonomy given to workers to allocate prices is a clear indication of the different practices between this type of second hand retail and normative retail.

Both shops continue to be run as “traditional” opportunity shops. Besides physical changes the increase in the provision of food parcels and the sale of religious paraphernalia seem to be the only other evident changes.
4.5 Restore

4.5.1 Location

This site is on the cross roads between the main northern and southern motorways, on the corner of Vogel Street and Gordon Streets. This is well away from retail sites and is surrounded by car maintenance sites and car sales yards. The shop has been trading since 2003. Restore is the Habitat for Humanity and Malcam Trust venue within Dunedin. It used to be known as the Charity Barn, but was renamed and rebranded with a new façade with both the Habitat for Humanity and Malcam Trust logo’s, along with the Restore brand on the outside of the building. This was a deliberate rebranding to ensure the shop benefits from the international Habitat for Humanity banner. Goods are sometimes donated because of the charitable connections and through “drop offs” – people just dropping things off at the store.

4.5.2 Operations

This site has a paid manager and two part time paid staff, with the majority of the labour force comprising volunteers or youth from the Malcam Trust. All goods are donated. The site is open Monday through Saturday between 8.30 to 5.30pm, but is often open before 8.30am. I asked Tessa, who is the paid manager of the site where the goods are sourced from:

VW: “So where does the stuff come from?”

Tessa: “Everywhere (laughs) it comes from everywhere we have. I mean this time of year it’s particularly busy because the students are packing up and they usually want to get rid of everything in their flats so we get inundated with furniture and a lot of household stuff from them. It’s also school fair and garage sale season so we get all the surplus stuff that doesn’t sell in those fairs and what have you and then we just have people that are regular customers that have clean outs and donate stuff willy nilly. We have hotels and motels that get rid of their stuff as they replace and they’ll donate. Like today we’re picking up from a store that’s gone into liquidation, they’ve had an auction there’s a whole bunch of stuff that’s left over that’s been offered to Habitat so we’re going out to pick it up.”

VW: “So is this a connection because the shop is quite closely connected with Habitat for Humanity and the Malcam Trust?”
Tessa: “We are, essentially we are on our own in so much that we are a store but we work for both. We raise money equally for both organisations. So effectively this is Habitat and Malcam Trust retail arm if you want to put it that way.”

VW: “So there must be quite a lot of community connections?”

Tessa: “Yes there are. Because of those two connections those organisations are connected with various other ones as well. With the Habitat side there’s a lot of church connection with the Anglican Family Care and those sorts of help organisations so we work with them. We also work with other organisations that have stores like ours who don’t get enough donations. Like Corso for example are quite reliant on us as a source of stock for them. And then on the Malcam Trust side we will get some of the people that work within their organisation that need work experience they can use us as a placement. So yeah it’s very far reaching as far as who we are in the community and how we’re connected with other groups”. (field notes Tessa 4.11.10)

Goods are set out on tables and clothes racks are located near the front of the store. There is a large back room where furniture is kept. The site splits the revenue made between both the internationally well-known Habitat for Humanity projects in Dunedin and the Dunedin based Malcam Trust. Habitat for Humanity is an organisation that builds homes for those who otherwise would not be able to afford to build. Currently two homes per year are constructed in Dunedin. Habitat for Humanity is a worldwide organisation. The Malcam trust is an organisation set up to encourage young people who may have fallen through the educational and social services cracks. The site is well utilised and provides a delivery service for larger items. Once again there is a paid manager as well as two paid part time staff.

VW: “How many staff is there now?”

Tessa: “All the staff that were here when I started is still here, so we have 10 or 15, 10 to 15 sort of core staff who are voluntary. There’s one other paid worker, one other part time paid worker and the rest are unpaid volunteers. On top of that we also have another sort of group of people that come from various volunteer agencies whether it is Volunteer Otago, Work-Bridge that sort of thing. So that’s another sort of 6 or 7 a week I pick up. Um and then on top of that we also take community service workers from corrections who need to do their community service hours
so they in turn will come here as well. In any given week I might have sort of anywhere between 10 and 20 people throughout the 6 days of trading” (field notes Tessa 4.11.10).

4.5.3 Changes

As described in this interview the site relies on a fluid movement of volunteers. Like the other opportunity shops in Dunedin without the volunteer staff this site would not be able to function. This voluntarism has connotations to the historically charitable aspect of opportunity shops where all staff were volunteers.

In contrast to many of the other sites there is always music played at this site and customers are encouraged to browse. This shop is particularly child friendly with a specific play area for children out the back of the shop near the furniture area. This is also positioned near the children’s clothes area, so parents can sort through and select clothing for children whilst the children are occupied. This site has a large variety of goods available and has an ongoing constant supply of goods coming out due to the lack of storage space available.

VW: “So how would you define the Restore is it an ‘op shop’?”

Tessa: “I don’t like the term op shop at all. I think it’s quite dated, but of course we still use it. I would call it a recycling emporium because that’s what it is. Yeah no we are, we’re a second hand store but I mean even that doesn’t cover it because things can obviously be second, third, fourth, fifth hand. So I think they are quite antiquated terms for what we are. I think we are a recycling store, we are a recycled goods store, whatever you want to call it and I think we are kind of the way of the future because stores like us are becoming increasingly important as far as recycling goods right across the board and obviously for people who can’t afford new stuff in the first retail.”

VW: “Do you think there’s an increase…?”

Tessa: “Oh absolutely, there’s been a real swing towards what we’re doing. Because of those reasons there have been people that like shopping with us because it’s a necessity. They can’t afford household things and because they struggle they’re on low incomes and all the rest of it. We have people who just enjoy op shopping and just love pottering around which are brilliant as
well but increasingly the area that we are really picking up on are the people that like the environmental aspect of what we are doing. Instead of going and buying new stuff they are buying pre-loved or second hand recycled stuff whatever you like so that appeals to them so that market is growing. People that can afford to buy new are shopping with us because they like the ethical part of it. That’s growing.”

VW: “So you have noticed a trend?”

Tessa: “Oh yeah”.
VW: “More people I know op shop now than ever before.

Tessa; “Yeah, absolutely. What I do notice is the diversity of people that come in, everyone from lawyers, to young families to homeless people. I mean it’s just every one. And so that’s I think we are kind of unique in that respect that’s growing more people are coming into the store” (field notes, Tessa 4.11.10).

This trend towards more diversity among the customers in opportunity shops has been noted in all the sites. Tessa has made it clear that the customers in this site have expanded to include people in all socio-economic classes. This is an indication that the place of opportunity shops has changed. The changing face of opportunity shoppers represents the standardising of the recycling ethic and a change in the economic dynamics of society as a whole. The promotion of such sites as “emporiums” rather than the “old fashioned” term of “op shop” is indicative of the larger changes. Shopping in these sites is no longer based on economic restrictions, ethical shopping practices and a wider societal acceptance of “recycling” has helped to widen the circle of contemporary opportunity consumers. The web sites for the Restore shop, which have been used to promote the site, are noted below. The Facebook site provides for a community of like-minded people to share their pictures of items purchased and in use or just comments on the photographs of objects for sale. The inclusion of these web based resources as a way to connect to the op-shopping public is utilised as a way to include what the two charitable organisations do, as well as keeping shoppers up to date with what is in store. The use of contemporary social media tools enhances the feeling of community interconnectedness. The application of social media to the

8 http://habitat.org.nz/index.php/pi_pageid/190
http://www.facebook.com/restore.dunedin
opportunity shopping community offers a contradictory role. Rather than having to physically come into the shop, Face Book friends can view online the latest goods in store – distancing the consumer from the object. This distancing is the opposite of what fundamentally opportunity shops are about – the fossicking through or hunt for a treasure. Attempts to keep business practices on a level with normal retail shops create these distances. This form of social distancing evident in the creation of face book pages – seems to me to be an antithesis of what charity shops actually are. Instead of having to physically be in the space before purchase can happen, items can be sold or “held” through the use of friends’ pages. This practice creates an imbalance in access to the goods.

As also noted in the interview with Tessa the store encompasses not only her business skills as a manager but also:

Tessa: “It’s a lifestyle choice I do for the love not money, (laughs), although the money is great because I need that but it’s something I really enjoy. I like what I love who I work with; I just like the whole nature of what we do. And it’s a great work environment I get to play great music and meet all these great people and you know we do it our own way we’re not confined by how stores, proper stores are meant to be run, and we’re not in a chain of store we’re just doing our thing and we’re doing it really well.” (field notes Tessa 4.11.10)

This quote typifies the ideal of opportunity shops as separate to capitalist run profit making shops. Nevertheless the making of profit for the associated charities is clearly defined placing the charities in the realm of our capitalist economy. Although Tess emphasises the ideal of opportunity shopping being a lifestyle choice rather than a necessity, she acknowledges that people shop in her place of work due to lack of choice. This shop has two Internet web sites, interactive areas or spaces where consumers can communicate to each other. The application of social media to the opportunity shopping community offers a contradictory role. Rather than having to physically come into the shop, Face Book friends can view online the latest goods in store – distancing the consumer from the object. This distancing is the opposite of what fundamentally opportunity shops are about – the fossicking through or hunt for a treasure. In an attempt to keep current some of the business practices of the shops are inherently about the creation of a distance that has no place in the opportunity of shopping. This inclusion of web sites and face book pages for the opportunity shops is an attempt to keep current. This change also reveals the assumption that most if not all people have access to computers in the home or
elsewhere, while this may well be relevant to the majority of the population it seems to be a denial of the socio-economic place of the “op-shopper”. The people the shops had all been, at least initially, set up to help. The electronic trajectory of the shops is better seen as the widening of the social community who do “op-shop”. No longer just spaces and places for the economically challenged to provide for themselves and their families. The shops have grown to include a large range of social and economic groups.

4.6 Butterflies

4.6.1 Location

One site that is situated very close to mainstream shopping and benefits from this is the Otago Community hospice op shop known and marketed as “Butterflies”. This shop is closest to the normal retail sector of Dunedin being straight across the road from the Meridian Mall. The shop has been in its current site for fourteen years. After being located a few shops away from the present site, it was three shops further up Hanover Street for a year. In total the site has been in business for fifteen years. The shop is the local hospice retail arm and has a constant supply of both shoppers and donations due to its premises being located in the main business area. This site is one of the most visible in Dunedin and is regularly mentioned in discussions of opportunity shopping. One of the reasons for the popularity of the site is the connection to its charity with the cancer hospice. The customers of this site seem to be more “up market” possibly because anyone from any class or social group can be affected by cancer.

4.6.2 Operations

The site is set up as similar to first cycle retail and has an army of volunteers along with two managers who are a husband and wife team. As the site is specifically set up to provide funds for Dunedin’s local hospice it has, from my experience, a bigger than average “drop off” rate. The positioning of the site is very close to the main shopping area for Dunedin. This means access to pedestrian traffic with an ongoing flow of potential shoppers. This site is always busy and the managers have a great knowledge of their regulars. This is not restricted to this site alone as I observed this happening in many other opportunity sites in Dunedin where customers are greeted by name. The shop is open 6 days a week and being in close proximity to both university and the
main retail area has a steady stream of foot traffic. The wife is paid a minimum wage for working a 40-hour week, while her husband works 80 hours week unpaid for the shop.

As noted with St Vincent de Paul shops, Butterflies makes a special effort for students by retaining green clothing over the course of the year for the annual St Patrick day parties. In the week leading up to St Patrick’s Day all of the stock in the shop is green. As with all of the shops that are part of the thesis it is apparent that the managers have personal relationships with some of the customers. This site also has the most recognized of fund raising motives with its connection to the local hospice.

4.6.3 Changes

In the last two years there has been a definite use of marketing strategies aimed at increasing public awareness of the Butterflies site and the relationship to the local hospice. “Give it Up for Hospice” is the latest promotional tool. Posters and television advertisements are also used asking people to donate good quality, label items for the charitable benefit of the Hospice sites. This is a national advertising campaign that benefits all the Hospice shops across the country. At the end of 2012 Camilla and Charles retired from working in the Hospice shop, the end of an era within the site. At the same time a larger Hospice shop was opened that was able to sell furniture, this site is distanced from the main shopping area and is at the corner of Police and Crawford Streets. The shop is so new however it is not represented on the map of sites.

4.7 Corso

4.7.1 Location

The Corso shop is in the Corso building in Moray Place. The building currently houses the shop, a bookstore, a newly opened café and the Stopping Violence organisation. The Corso shop has been in its present location for the last fifteen years. The placement of the shop itself is reminiscent of the previous position of opportunity shops that were housed in church halls or in back streets. The shop is in upper Moray Place, a prestigious locality for business and opposite a busy car parking building. Recently the business above the shop has closed down and whether
this will have an impact on the site remains to be seen. After several months the restaurant above the shop, in the same building was re-opened under new management.

4.7.2 Operations

The shop is run by Nancy, who has been there for 13 years. There are three other workers who all defer to Nancy. The shop is open for business from Tuesday to Friday between 10am and 2pm. However, frequently Nancy will work on a Monday behind the scenes, sorting through goods. Although in place for a long time this particular site seems to remain a well-guarded secret as I still come across Dunedinites who do not realise it exists. There used to be another Corso opportunity shop in New Zealand, but now the only one is located in Dunedin. It has also retained their two-dollar bag sale, where people fill up a supermarket bag of clothing for $2. Other sites in Dunedin that previously used this as a promotional tool to entice customers into the sites and as a means of getting rid of surplus or unwanted stock have increased the price to $5 for a bag. This may seem a minor difference but is significant for beneficiaries and those on fixed low incomes. This lack of increase in price is seen as positive in the Corso shop, by shoppers and the staff. Nancy is the acknowledged manager of the shop but has a boss. As was evidenced from my time as a participant and a volunteer there, all communication relating to the site was restricted between Nancy and her boss. Nancy is effectively in control of the shop, deciding the opening hours and when the sales take place. The shop briefly opened on Saturdays when another volunteer was happy to work at the weekend, but this did not last very long and was deemed a waste of time by the volunteers.

As part of my research I volunteered at this site for a day with Nancy. This was helpful for the information gained into the inner workings of this particular organisation and also to the interconnectedness between the Dunedin sites.

My working day began with a cup of tea and an assessment of what racks needed to be filled. The clothes are divided into one large section for adults and another space for children’s clothing, subdivided according to age group. Also in this area are bedding, china, handbags and knick-knacks. The adult’s clothes are not clearly labelled so unless you are a “regular” shopper you would have to have a detailed look to find the men’s section. Nancy and the other volunteers do make an effort to inform new shoppers of the layout of the shop.
After the first customers arrive Nancy says it’s time for putting stock out. We go out to the storage area at the back of the shop where Nancy has clearly been sorting the banana boxes of stock into specific areas. This stock in the banana boxes has come from the “Restore” shop. Nancy made it quite clear that she will put out only what she thinks will sell. Nancy says if it wasn’t for the Bargain Barn (Restore) that she would have had to close the shop down this year as hardly any stock has been donated. She said even the students had not been leaving items, as they usually do at the end of the academic year, when they leave Dunedin. This downturn was attributed to the recession and to “computers” where people sell goods and therefore do not donate. This change is discussed below.

During the course of the volunteer day there had only been eight customers, six who purchased something. The shop was at that time having a two-dollar bag sale. This is the quickest way for the shop to get rid of old stock and brings out new clothes. Nancy is very clear that any “label” clothing that is in the stock area is to be kept for after the sale time as more money can be made from this (Volunteering, field notes 10.12.10).

The social connection between the sites means that not only are goods circulated around them but that also an awareness of the greater community need is valued between them. The relationships between the sites mean that if one is low on donations they can ask a larger organisation for help. This was observed as happening between three different organisations, which in turn donated on unwanted goods to other sites. The “gifting” of donations has much wider implications than just between the public and the sites themselves. In contrast to the majority of other charity-retail sites the interior of the Corso site has not been revamped. The women in this site are all known to each other socially and tend to be older. The manager of the shop has since volunteered at another site within Dunedin.

4.8 Charity Barn

4.8.1 Location

Charity Barn is one of the two newest sites in Dunedin having only opened in November 2010. Unlike most other op shops in Dunedin this site is in the more industrial area along Kaikorai Valley Road, rather than in the central business district or the south Dunedin shopping area. Unlike the other sites this shop has a dedicated area for used paint. As this site is new to Dunedin, although affiliated with those of the same name in Christchurch, two of the established
Dunedin op shops are involved in donating stock to the site. This site is affiliated with several shops in Christchurch and with a Scottish based organisation called Mary’s Meals; where meals are made for the poor in Scotland. The extension of the Marys Meals and the Charity Barn “brand” into Dunedin corresponded with the earthquakes in Christchurch in September 2010 and February 2011 that devastated large areas of the city. Large quantities of goods were donated from across the country to those affected.

4.8.2 Operations

This shop also incorporates the “Free Shop”, within the back half of the shop. This is dedicated to clothing and items. The front of the shop is presented like the other op shops with racks of goods divided into men’s, women’s and children’s clothing and shoes and with household goods and furniture on one side of the shop. In the course of an interview with Hannah it was established that goods are donated from Restore and Corso (field-notes Hannah 23.3.11). This circulation of goods throughout the charity shops in Dunedin indicated a gift-exchange that has no corresponding behaviour among capitalist based retail outlets.

4.8.3 Changes

During the course of the thesis this shop has gone through several changes. The first of the changes was the removal of Hannah as the manager. Hannah was replaced with a man associated very closely with the Christchurch branches. Within six months this man was also replaced with one of the original volunteers. The site also changed its name to “This and that: Charity for Kids” and disassociated itself from Mary’s Meals. The layout of the shop and the prices of items have also fluctuated with the changes in management. With the free part of the shop still operating, all of the children’s toys that are judged to have an economic value are locked away and you have to ask to gain entrance to this area and be supervised by a member of staff. The main work force remains voluntary. “Goodies” opened in response to the original manager being made redundant from this site and has opened in opposition to the Charity Barn which itself has undergone another identity and management change. What these specific changes show are the fluidity of opportunity shops, the adaptability of the people who run them. “Goodies” was initially run to help provide funds for the local community garden initiative.
4.9 Orphans Aid

4.9.1 Location

Orphans Aid International opened within easy walking distance to South Dunedin shopping centre on Hillside Road. The site is next to a main bus stop and just around the corner from the South Dunedin shopping centre that is going through the process of being re-vamped and publicised as a shopping destination.

4.9.2 How it operates

As with the Charity Barn this is a new site within Dunedin having only been established in November 2010. It is, along with another in Invercargill, the brainchild of Sue van Schreven from Queenstown. The shops were established to produce funds for an orphanage in Romania. As with Charity Barn these two sites are unusual as the charities the monies are raised for are not local. Orphans Aid has opened close to the main shopping centre of South Dunedin. As reported in *The Star* on 10 June 2010;

“A charity store has opened in South Dunedin to help raise money for abandoned children throughout the world. Run by Christian –based charitable trust Orphans Aid International, which was founded in 2004 by Sue and Carl van Schreven, of Queenstown, the op-shop will raise money for the charity’s overseas projects, including funding an orphanage in Romania, a centre for street kids in Russia and a home for abandoned children in Nepal” (Michelle McCullough, *The Star* 10.6.10).

4.10 Internet shopping

Location in this context is not relevant, particularly with the popularity of portable laptops and free Wi-Fi, which means Internet shopping is potentially available at any time.

“Trade Me” works as an online auction site where photographs of items are posted on the trade me site and people bid on the items (O’Donnell 2010). If the item does not reach a set financial
target it can be removed from the site. “Trade Me”\textsuperscript{9} is a New Zealand based web site and is the only one that I have included in this discussion.

Another Internet based site is “Free-cycle”\textsuperscript{10}, an international initiative that encourages people to reduce waste in their local landfills. The ethic of recycling which is strongly present in the classical sense of opportunity shopping is promoted in this Internet group.

“Our mission is to build a worldwide gifting movement that reduces waste, saves precious resources & eases the burden on our landfills while enabling our members to benefit from the strength of a larger community”\textsuperscript{11}.

This particular site has a large active membership within the wider Dunedin community.

In the wider global context the Internet has impacted on opportunity shopping in a variety of ways. A decade ago most homes did not have a computer but now most people own them or cell phones that have Internet applications. The international increase in Internet use and the shrinking of our global world has impacts both for the individual shopper and for the opportunity shops. Trade Me” which is a New Zealand shopping site where people sell things online has impacted greatly on the op shop cycle of distribution. Some sites use the “Trade Me” site as a way to increase their revenue by selling goods online. Some op shoppers themselves have become “traders” and buy goods from opportunity shops to sell online. Tessa (field notes 4.11.10) supported this but another interviewee had a differing view:

VW: “so do you buy stuff off trade me as well?”
Peggy: “nah I experimented with it but I’d rather go to an op shop and have it in my hand and look at it I find Trade Me just doesn’t work for clothes don’t know the size if you’ve got it you’re stuck with it, got to pay for postage, got to wait. Op shops are instant.”
VW: “Instant gratification, in the consumer world.”
Peggy: “Exactly” (field notes Peggy 3.11.10).

\textsuperscript{9} http:www.trademe.co.nz
\textsuperscript{10} http://freecycle.org
\textsuperscript{11} permission granted 4.April 2012, Deron Beal
Some opportunity shops use the “Trade Me” site to increase their target market and income. One manager I talked said she tried this but it was too much work for little financial reward (field notes Hannah 23.3.11).

Both “Trade Me” and “Free-cycle” are evidence of a wider social movement to include Internet based sites and social media into our private domestic and consumer lives. The sites have interactive areas or spaces where consumers can communicate to each other. The application of social media to the opportunity shopping community offers a contradictory role. Rather than having to physically come into the shop, face book friends can view online the latest goods in store – distancings the consumer from the object. This distancing is the opposite of what fundamentally opportunity shops are about – the fossicking through or hunt for a treasure. The inclusion of web sites and face book pages for the opportunity shops is an attempt to keep current. This change also reveals the assumption that most if not all people have access to computers in the home or elsewhere, while this may well be relevant to the majority of the population it seems to be a denial of the socio-economic place of the “op-shopper”. The people the shops had all been, at least initially, set up to help. The electronic trajectory of the shops is better seen as the widening of the social community who do “op-shop”. No longer just spaces and places for the economically challenged to provide for themselves and their families. The shops have grown to include a large variance of social and economic groups.

4.12 Conclusion

During the last ten years there have been many changes among opportunity shops in Dunedin as with other retail sites. Initially many of the opportunity shops were in the main retail areas of Dunedin. Most have been refurbished to keep up with the changes in the retail sector, as the sites compete with first cycle retail outlets for consumers’ dollars. Some have set themselves up as being alongside and competing with capitalist sites. The change away from charity based opportunity sites for second hand provisioning along with the associated sights and smells of second hand buying has been challenged by the increasing professionalization within many of the differing sites. Gregson and Crewe (2003:75-78) have given many descriptions of the increasing professionalization that occurred in Britain and I will endeavour to do the same in the Dunedin context. The movement towards professionalization impacts not only on the physical spaces but also on the volunteers and the consumers of these sites. Often in the course of fieldwork I have
noted that shoppers would say how a site was becoming too expensive so they stop shopping there. An increase in the number of people who now partake of second cycle shopping has increased along with a larger variance in the social classes that these consumers occupy, as noted: “What I do notice in here is the diversity of people that come in, everyone from lawyers to young families to homeless people” (field notes Tessa 4.11.10).

Changes in the spatial layout of the opportunity shops in Dunedin and in their physical locations indicate changes in the place of the sites within Dunedin’s retail sector. Of the sites initially researched all have changed in either one or both of these ways. Most of the sites reviewed already existed in 2000, although in the last two years two new sites have opened in Dunedin. As the interviews and field notes show some of these sites exist in collaboration with one another and in some instances remain open because of this collaboration.

The gift and exchanges of the opportunity shops is more significant than first suspected. Gifting and exchanging goods forms one of the connections between the sites in Dunedin, revealing larger community relations within the opportunity shop.

“We also work with other organisations that have stores like ours who don’t get enough donations like Corso for example are quite reliant on us as a source for stock for them” (field notes Tessa 4.11.10).

There seem to be two changes in the sites that represent the two types of opportunity shops. Places such as Restore and Corso are presented as opportunity shops in the traditional sense where rummaging and fossicking is seen as the part of the experience. The second change in the sites is the professionalization represented by “Shop on Carroll”, where the presentation of vintage, handpicked items plays to the discernment of the purchaser. The increase in the prices of donated goods there also ties into the professionalization of the sites as discussed by Gregson and Crewe (2003:41). My thesis has provided a clear distinction within the confines of opportunity shops between those that promote a recycling ethic but remain more traditional in appearance and the more prestigious appearance of charity retail sites. Charity retail is the creation of shops that try to place themselves closer to first cycle retail. One of the ironies of opportunity shops of all types is that all of the goods have already been approved as being in reasonable condition to be sold. The negation of this through the “rummaging” and fossicking undertaken by the consumers of these sites is counterintuitive.
Some of these changes would also indicate that opportunity shoppers are becoming a part of the capitalist economy. Fundraising through second hand retail indicates an awareness of the choice of the consumer. Charity retail sites target the shopper who likes “vintage” clothing or who is happy to view their shopping as “recycling”. By encompassing these terms in their marketing strategies charity retail outlets borrow meaning and a “green” ethic to encourage consumption – which means profit.

These changes are inclusive of the style of shopping – within “carnivals of consumption” (Langman 1992:42) or malls that are becoming more visible within the larger context of New Zealand/ Aotearoa and Dunedin. I prefer to think of opportunity shops as the merry-go-rounds of consumption, where the cycles of donation and purchase are continuous. The particular expansion of mall spaces has meant that retail sites within the central business district have become available for other retail ventures. Charity-retail shops are moving into the more centralised areas within Dunedin – a process noted in Gregson and Crewe’s work in the United Kingdom (2003:40-41). The major difference between the gradual process of charity-retail becoming more centralised within Dunedin and England is that the sites occupied here are not short-term lease units. The “professionalization” of sites within Dunedin has a more permanent basis; an example is the Red Cross shop. The shop has moved from next door to the Red Cross organisation to a retail site in Saint Andrew Street. The professionalization process can also been seen in the Presbyterian support case. One major difference between these sites is that the new Presbyterian support shop had moved to the outskirts of the major retail areas. The formation of the new site is a result of using space efficiently as the new site backs on to the new storage facility for the organisation.

Traditionally opportunity shops in New Zealand have been positioned away from main streets for a variety of reasons, such as the cost of rent. It is also much more acceptable for consumers to be seen to shop in opportunity shops than in the past, when an inability to provide for your family was seen as failure. It is much more common these days for people to choose to shop in opportunity shops as well as commercial retail sites. From anecdotal accounts Restore is a favourite as it is child friendly and large enough that people can happily spend large amounts of time without being hassled by staff. The site then is more than a second hand shop but also place of social interaction for staff and consumers alike.
This was observed by Gregson and Crewe:

“So, ‘tramps’, the homeless and so on come into these spaces, not to look in the manner suggested by charity retail’s representational strategies, but to keep warm, to ask for clothing and to talk to others – volunteers, customers.” ... “Rather than accord with specific fund-raising imperatives and charity retail’s core premise that these are ‘proper shops’, certain individuals at least engage in a series of practices that suggest that charity shops are a long way indeed from their models, and – both implicitly and explicitly – invoke counter readings of ‘charity’ to legitimate their actions” (2003:79).

Tessa saw such behaviour as a positive service for her “regulars”, as they could come in even if they had no intention of making a purchase.

Op Shoppers sometimes also have a circuit of op shops based on geography, in some instances this is based on accessibility through public transport.

Gregson and Crewe make the distinction in the United Kingdom context between charity shops and charity retail sites (2003:40. There is now more of the latter in the context of New Zealand, with most of the sites in my thesis making the leap from charity driven opportunity shops to profit driven specialist shops selling second hand goods. Profit is still positioned as fund raising. There is a clear distinction between the two types of sites that is helpful to employ in this thesis. These different sites seem to be aiming at very different markets and consumers. Initially there was some resistance from seasoned opportunity shoppers to the changes. These changes can be observed by the changes in the demographics of the shoppers as noted by Tessa (field notes 4.11.10).

This chapter has discussed the changes in the opportunity shops in Dunedin, which is also indicative of changes within the larger commercial shopping area. One of the reasons for movement of some of the sites into more commercially viable sites is the building of two malls in Dunedin. Many retail sites have moved into mall complexes that have left commercial properties open for re-use. The international recession has impacted on all retail sites in Dunedin with the charity shops benefiting from the downwards-economic trend. People from middle and upper income sectors are becoming more frequent visitors to these sites, albeit with different motivations than lower income people looking to provide for themselves and families. One such
person said to me “Oh no it’s not op shopping its vintage shopping dear” (field notes Candy 17.6.11). Vintage shopping is implied as more up-market than opportunity shopping.

The history of the opportunity shop in Dunedin is not just of the sites themselves but of the societal and cultural changes that happen at all times in all communities. As with changes in capitalist driven retail sites the opportunity shops and the associated non-governmental organisations that are behind them are constantly looking for ways to increase their profit or fund raising ability. Most of the opportunity shops are affiliated to organisations that provide services to the general populace that our government does not. Therefore the customers of these sites could be seen as providing their own social resources through the active participation in second cycle shopping. This is driven by economic necessity and by increasing popular views that recycling is ethically sustainable. What does seem clear in reviewing the history of the Dunedin sites is that there seems to be a definite place for opportunity shops within and alongside profit driven capitalist based businesses.

Along with fund-raising many of the charity shops that are included in the thesis help to provide funds for other social services accessible through the individual organisations. Three of the sites mentioned also provide food parcels to those in need and various other social services such as addiction rehabilitation, help and homes for the elderly, job seeking help and anger management courses as well as counselling. This shows how the charity-retail arm of these organisations provides funding for many other aspects. The importance of these sites as places of first contact for access to extra help seems to be overlooked by the general population. Although New Zealand/Aotearoa is considered to be a “welfare state” several services usually expected to be provided by government agencies are provided for by charity-based organisations. Many of the lower-socio economic customers of opportunity shops are on government benefits that offer a basic income – without much room to financially manoeuvre. The overall global recession is being blamed for the increasing use of food banks by low to middle income families, certainly within the Dunedin context. Perhaps the financial struggle to survive in the current economic climate is more of an indictment on society as a whole and the belief that the individual consumption of consumer goods will make us happy. The increase in advertisements promoting hire purchase, 24 months interest free terms and the like seems to place increasingly unrealistic financial burdens on people already struggling with increased daily costs such as food and the provision of basic necessities (in the west certainly) of power and telecommunications. Nevertheless there does seem to be an increasing backlash against the pervasiveness of
consumption as a means of happiness in modern life - with the advent of sites like “free –cycle”, and grass roots movements based on sustainable choices.
Chapter 5: Charity in Capitalism.

5.1 Capitalism and Opportunity Shops.

This chapter is a discussion of the practices of opportunity shops within contemporary capitalism. The analysis consists of reviewing opportunity shops as businesses in western capitalism. The businesses I focused on fall into three categories. First, the traditional opportunity shops promote the idea of fossicking for a bargain and the finding of treasures. Secondly, the opportunity shops that have tried to co-opt first cycle retail practices into their shops. Primarily to increase the funds they can raise through raising the prices they charge. Thirdly, are the first cycle retail chain stores. Provisioning of goods is the basis for the distinction between the three types, but is by no means the only distinction. The following is a discussion of how these sites present themselves in different ways. The “traditional” opportunity shops appear to be in sharp contrast to the more contemporary charity retail sites; I suggest that the differences are only cosmetic as they both sell donated second hand goods. I first noted the trend of opportunity shops replicating marketing strategies of first cycle retail in 2001-2002. The objective was to decrease the distance between first and second cycle purchasing. I will show how these specific marketing strategies have only made the gap between the two types of shop more apparent. As Gregson and Crewe say the changes in the presentation of objects in the sites “... is constituted around and striated by the mass market and mass consumption [these structural changes] “... also encodes is some of the core premises shaping this particular version of second-hand exchange: that (first-cycle) retailing provides stocks of knowledge/s and practices relating to selling that can be transplanted in to the second-hand arena; that second hand goods can be sold in ways that are identical to these; and that the first/ second-hand distinction can be erased through representational strategies” (2003:76).

The practices that are involved in opportunity shopping are in part being knowledge-able about market prices but this is only one skill needed. The labelling of objects is apparent as one definitive change over the course of the research. Some of the changes are represented in Dunedin as part of this process, apparently global changes, are colour coding of clothes, different colours representing different values and more defined areas for different types of clothes such as children’s women’s and men’s. Household goods are also divided into knick-knacks, dishes and pots and pans. These divisions create a contradiction in opportunity shops; that the workers have
already sorted the goods before the treasure hunting by shoppers’ starts. As discussed in chapter three the opportunity shops within this case study are all associated with larger international or national organisations. The sites raise funds for the larger organisations they are associated with. There is a definite move to promote some of the opportunity shops as being within a specific charity retail brand, as opposed to just being opportunity shops. Charities now use marketing tools to promote the sites as being more like retail chains, where all shops are presented as spatially similar and under one national or international umbrella. In the case of the Salvation Army sites this is indicated by the use of the term “Sally Family Stores”. The “Give it up For Hospice” marketing campaign of Hospice shops indicates the increasingly sophisticated ways opportunity shops are competing for donations. The competition for donations and therefore profits is highlighted in various ways across the charity retail sector. Nationally viewed television advertising campaigns infer national participation in donation and are promoted as a way of supporting the local community. This is also a way for charity shops across the country to benefit from one marketing tool. The movement from opportunity shops as working to raise funds instead has been replaced by the business of raising profits. The construction of some of the opportunity sites as destination shops for retro items appears to be in conflict with the charitable basis of opportunity shops.

I use data from my research to compare and contrast these sites from the perspective of consumers and also in relation to capitalist business practices. The juxtaposition of opportunity shops presenting themselves as good as new shops opens up an area contested by consumers as unfair and deemed as uncharitable by my informants. A concern with the over pricing of goods has been noted by consumers, managers and workers with varying degrees of opposition. As indicated by this comment made by Tessa “We haven’t got above ourselves knowing that things are worth more”, meaning they do not always charge appropriate prices for goods so that low income shoppers can still afford valuable things (field work notes Tessa 4.11.10).

The most important aspect that distinguishes opportunity shops from first cycle retail is the provisioning of goods. In first cycle retail the goods are provisioned through purchase to be on sold to customers. Within opportunity shops the only form of provisioning is through private donation. The inward flow of goods is therefore uncertain, sporadic and dependent on public acts of charity. To distinguish opportunity shops further from capitalist retail outlets is through the structures surrounding the workers in these sites most that are volunteers. The employment of paid mangers is a relatively new aspect of the opportunity shops in Dunedin, occurring within the
last decade (2001-2012). Similar changes in opportunity shops in the United Kingdom have been identified as “professionalization” by Gregson & Crewe (2003:76). In one Dunedin instance, Presbyterian Support, the movement to representing the objects for sale as having normative retail exchange value has seen the opening and marketing of a new site. In “Shop on Carroll” the goods are presented as retro or vintage and create a re-evaluation of the goods. The terms vintage and retro refer to the previous decades that in terms of consumer goods currently infer coolness. There is a specific niche market attributed to these eras.

5.1.1 Global Financial Crisis and Earthquakes: moves in charity

The goods of choice in opportunity shops come with notions of thrift, economy and recycling. The participation in opportunity shopping is to consume in an alternative market that provides consumer goods at low prices. Second hand retail sites hold the debris of mass consumption. One of my research aims was to discover how these sites have remained productive in the economic sense in the midst of the recent Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and how they remain in business during all kinds of economic climates. These sites are becoming more utilised by the general public, rather than merely low-income consumers and indicative is perhaps of a combination of both an increasing awareness of a green recycling ethic and the larger global recession.

Although historically viewed as places that students and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds shop opportunity shops are becoming more socially acceptable. People across wider socio-economic backgrounds now consume through these sites. The Global Financial Crisis (GFC), which has been ongoing since 2008, and the economic recession that subsequently hit New Zealand have impacted on the disposable income of a large sector of New Zealand society. The GFC seems to have reawakened a recycling ethic among consumers as well. As noted by Tessa “People that can afford to buy new are shopping with us because they like the ethical part of it. So that’s growing” (field notes 4.11.10). The economic strife many people have found themselves in has meant a sharp decrease in disposable income as banks and other lending businesses have curbed their lending. The effects of international and national financial difficulties and crisis within industry have meant a downturn in incomes and therefore spending.
“At the root of the market failure that led to the current crisis was optimism bred by a long period of high growth and low real interest rates and volatility, together with a series of political failures” Jose Vinals, Financial Counsellor with the IMF (International Monetary Fund).12

The basic prices of food have increased by 24-51 percent in the last five years13. The practice of everyday provisioning for family and self has become a challenge to even middle income earners. The global recession has impacted on New Zealand’s economy as well, with unemployment at a higher than normal rate, being 6.7 percent in the first quarter of 2012.14 This is reflected locally in the increase for the need for donations to food banks and the increase in the number of people requesting food parcels. Social services provided by some of the opportunity shops are food parcels given to customers. In order to receive the food parcels the clients are either referred by Work and Income New Zealand – (WINZ), or appeal directly to the shops for assistance (Field notes St Vincent de Paul, George Street January – February 2012). WINZ is the national social service agency that provides benefits. Although many of the other charity shops are associated with food parcels St Vincent de Paul is the only one to distribute parcels directly from the shop site and does so within restricted hours. The provision of such basic resources like food within the charitable sector can be seen as a response to the WINZ policy that allows for one food parcel for one client every six months. As a current beneficiary I am aware of and have used this resource. The call for such parcels can be seen also as a reflection of larger social issues, as it is no longer just beneficiaries who are in need of these goods but families on middle incomes. This is also reflected in the decreased ability of people to participate in first cycle shopping.

The earthquakes in Christchurch during September 2010 and February 2011 have also impacted on the opportunity shops within Dunedin. Two have donated goods to people who have relocated to Dunedin from Christchurch after the earthquakes. The quakes and destruction they wrought on Christchurch residents seems to have renewed a charitable ethic among many New Zealanders.

14 http://www.tradingeconomics.com/new-zealand/unemployment-rate
5.2 Gifts

The difference between first and second cycle retail is in the provisioning of goods. Those within the opportunity shops studied are completely donated; this immediately takes opportunity shops out of the usual capitalist equation of labour-product-profit. Profit is the basic driver of capitalist business, while fund raising drives opportunity shops. As discussed the opportunity shop is usually the fund raising arm of a variety of non-governmental organisations. The donation of goods within these sites impacts on the gift-exchange dichotomy; the goods are gifts but gifts with no expected reciprocal exchange. As Gudeman discusses: “Gifts are converted to reciprocity for different reasons. Reciprocity can cement a relationship and establish community. The gift may express affection and mutuality but also a power difference, for the giver is able to cede part of her base without requiring requital” (2001:89).

Gudeman (2001) suggests that power is an essential part of gift giving. One gives to another and that act displays not only economic but also social standing. How does this power differential present within opportunity shops? The power difference is economic and social; the donor can discard commodities without needing financial recompense, or public recognition. The donation of the goods does not retain something of the giver, who remains anonymous. Reciprocity between the giver and the receiver would appear to have no place within op shops. The basis for the opportunity shops is outside of the capitalist equation and challenges gift-exchange theory. The gift without exchange of either a reciprocal gift or public recognition is what makes opportunity shops work. The gift of a consumer item or for that matter labour in the form of volunteering is embedded within the charitable aspect of the opportunity shops. The “gift” in both these forms becomes the basis of production. The equation becomes donation/gift – purchase - re-commodification.

Within the sites in Dunedin I have also documented a thriving social network. They are a consequence of the wider social ties that are a vital aspect of opportunity shops in Dunedin. The gifting of goods from one to another reveals a culture of gifting within Dunedin charity shops. Goods are re-circulated within and between the sites that have social ties - effectively to keep some open. The reciprocity between sites, with volunteers also working at more than one location indicates a wider social connection than between and within first cycle retail outlets. The donation in opportunity shops is labour, time or material objects as noted by research participants, frequently those who donate to the sites also participate in shopping within them.
The donation of goods reduces the need to sell at market value to make a profit. Although profit is made whatever the donated good is sold for, overheads like power however do still need to be paid. This takes the sites away from the first cycle of consumption and production. The same goods that are sold in first cycle shops can be found in second hand sites.

5.3 Professionalization

Among Dunedin opportunity shops three of the sites studied have moved to become “professionalised”. Evidence of this can be found through physical changings such as moving or redecorating the sites, and by re-branding. The franchising and re-branding of different sites within non-governmental organisations represented within the Dunedin context provide a very good case study of what Gregson and Crewe refer to as the “professionalization of sites” (2003:76). This has had varying results for the charities involved. This process has happened in Dunedin during the last ten years. This movement towards the creation of destination charity shops is a sideways leap that is “… motivated by the desire to constitute charity shops as equivalent to ‘the new’, these practices - through their very significance – work to reinscribe the importance of second – hand as a distinction that matters” Gregson and Crewe (2003:78). The use of the discourse vintage and retro appear to be associated, by the consumers of the sites, as simply a way to increase the cost of items. This would seem to be an correct assumption as the best of some types of clothing and objects are taken to the more up-market of the charity based second hand sites to provide a better profit for the associated organisations. This change has been remarked on as sites: “… getting above themselves”. (Field notes Tessa 4.11.10). More generally there appears to be discontentment among people who view themselves as “real” op shoppers: “Things have changed op shopping as competitive, people pushing and shoving”. (Field notes 4.8.10 ‘Kitty’).

These statements were made in relation to the improvements in the sites, the de-valuing of the “hunt” for a bargain as a shopping practice of a “good” charity shopper, with good quality, retro style clothing taken from the usual charity shops and put into the newer shops. This was viewed as discriminating against consumers who shop in charity shops because they have to. These are the “real” op shoppers that Kitty referred to. This makes visible the changes that the consumers see within the sites. The increasing “professionalization” of the shops is blamed for this – even if
this is not the terminology the shoppers themselves use. The definitions of “retro” and “vintage” are both used to imbue the goods for sale as valuable – it is a way to signify difference and to increase the profit margin of the shops – whether they are charity based or retail sites. In Dunedin one shop that describes itself as a “retro shop for men and women” is Purple Rain on Princes Street, but this is not a destination for opportunity shoppers. The whole display in the shop is focused on knowledge of past trends with the 1970’s being the era displayed. The owners present themselves as knowledgeable about this era and embrace the clothing and style of this time - attributing glamour to the era in order to sell objects. The shop space itself is a fabulous area of display –with all items for sale. The distinction between “retro” and “vintage” shops and charity shops is one that Gregson and Crewe make clear in their (2003) study. In the case of the professionalization of charity shops they remark that the shops have tried to emulate the success of the British retro shops by using this terminology – not always successfully. The replication of “retro” and “vintage” only works in the charity context when it is used as specifically, as in the case with “Shop on Carroll”. Rather than being presented primarily as an opportunity shop it is presented as a destination “retro” shop, with prices and a customer base that reflect this. One aspect of retail shopping that has been co-opted into the realm of opportunity shops is the use of club cards. This specific marketing tool recognises an individual’s shopping potential. It marks the consumer out as an elite member of a “club”. I have witnessed the use of a type of club card within the Salvation Army shops in the wider Otago region. Discount is achieved after the purchase of ten items in the Balclutha store. This co-opting of a first cycle retail marketing strategy in a charity environment seems at odds as it indicates encouragement for these consumers to buy more. The use of this marketing tool is a very good example of the attempt to negate the differences between first and second cycle shopping. Discounting items after several purchases seems an odd way to promote a charitable organisation, where presumably goods for sale are already below market prices. A a consequence of the professionalization of opportunity shops there has been a move to re-invent the value to the objects found in opportunity shops and to value the contributions of the workers.

5.4 Consumer Culture

The sites studied present themselves as being alongside normal or first cycle retail in both physical location and in the internal spatial layouts of the shops. The movement of goods from first to second cycle consumption is based on the difference between the use and exchange values
placed upon the goods by individuals, the goods having outlived either or both of these values. The assumption in donating goods is that they will continue to have a use-value for another. “The most general objective of the consumer can only be to construct an intelligible universe with the goods he chooses” (Douglas and Isherwood 01:43).

The different ways opportunity shops represent themselves impact not only on their ability to raise funds but also on the consumers that participate in this form of consumption. Opportunity Shops provide for lower income sectors of society as well fund raising for the organisations involved.

One difference between charity and first cycle retail sites is the use of toy areas for children. It is not unusual for customer’s children to play with the toys in opportunity shops, even if there is not intent to purchase them. Within retail the instalment of contained spaces for children’s play is used as a way of giving parents more shopping time. Within opportunity shops there is almost always a dedicated space for children, such as the Salvation Army store in Mosgiel, where a DVD player with a seating area has been set up for children. It is considered the norm that children play with toys on display and some opportunity sites have specific toy boxes for just playing with. A consequence of this is that parents have a more relaxed shopping experience. What was observed consistently enough to be deemed a feature of opportunity shops was the practice of giving children the toys they had played with in the shop.

As indicated by the following excerpt from my interview with Kate the consumers of opportunity shops have different views on consumer goods and the processes of shopping. The shopping skills used by opportunity shoppers vary greatly from normative consumption. Second hand consumers need to have large chunks of time available to spend “sifting” through the goods. The most basic thing needed in order to be able to consume is money. Often in defining who uses opportunity shops the tension between having large amounts of “free” time and small quantities of money is apparent, as described by the field notes below.

VW: “So what’s your favourite one of all the op shops?”
Kate: “Bargain Barn [Restore] even though it is cluttered but I like going in there and just sifting (laughs)”
VW: “So do you think that that is um part of the charm of op shopping the sifting?”

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Kate: “The sifting it has to because you go into a normal shop and it’s all laid out for you. And op shopping they do try to put everything on the racks and everything like that but um you can’t do that with things like your puzzles and your toys and all that sort of stuff. And you have to sift through it to find hidden treasures or whatever it is”
VW: “But you like that part of it?”
Kate: “Yeah” (field notes Kate 27.10.10)

This was corroborated by other discussion with informants. That the creation of the idea of finding a “treasure” seems to be the epitome for opportunity shoppers implies that the time frame needed to participate can be justified. The shopper defines the “treasure”, making true the adage what is one man’s junk is another’s treasure. The provisioning of goods is not the only aspect of difference between opportunity shops and normal retail. As Clarke says: “...forms of acquisition carry ideological discourse” (1998:75). The form of acquisition in opportunity shops is represented by the search or fossicking for goods. In opportunity shops it is in the moments of construction of ownership rituals and the divestment of prior ownership that point to the special skills of the consumers. This is represented by the act of fossicking or searching for treasure and the re-valuation that is given to goods that are chosen.

VW: “What age did you start to op shop?”
Peggy: “Oh gosh teenage, teenage years, as old as I probably started going out on my on, leaving the house on my own – years.”
VW: “Why did you start?”
Peggy: “Because it was a bargain, and there was treasures and it was like being in my grandmother’s house and I could buy these things for next to nothing and I could home with things – my bedroom was like an op shop when I was 12 years old. Just quirky stuff, cute stuff and clothes as well as tins and little trinket boxes and jewellery. Made money go far” (field notes Peggy 3.11.10).

Workers have nearly always sorted the goods before they are put in to the shops. Opportunity shop consumers seem to overlook this pattern of selection but fossicking plays a major role in this form of consumption.

One well-documented and pervasive difference within the Dunedin sites is the relationships between the managers, workers and consumers. Socialising is also a large part of opportunity
shopping that separates it from normal consumptive practices. As discussed in the interview below there are many forms of community links within and between opportunity shops and the wider society.

VW: “So is this a connection because the shop is quite closely connected with Habitat for humanity and the Malcam trust?”
Tessa: “We are, essentially we are on our own in so much that we are a store but we work for both we raises money equally for both organisations. So effectively this is Habitat and Malcam trust retail arm if you want to put it that way.”
VW: “So there must be quite a lot of community connections?”
Tessa: “Yes there are. Because of those two connections those organisations are connected with various other ones as well. With the Habitat side there’s a lot of church connections with Anglican Family Care and those sorts of help organisations so we work with them. We also work with other organisations that have stores like ours like who don’t get enough donations like Corso for example are quite reliant on us as a source for stock for them. And then on the Malcam trust side we will get some of the people that work within their organisation that need work experience they can use us as a placement. So yeah its very far reaching as far as who we are in the community and how we’re connected with other groups” (field notes Tessa 4.11.10).

Consumption itself seems to be a by-product of modernity although it has been historically well documented (see Corrigan 1997, Carrier 1995). Bauman considers modern society as a “society of consumers”(2007:53) this idea however is not a new idea, although Bauman’s harsh explanation of it is. The act of shopping “...is a highly public moment in the circulation of goods” (Lunt and Livingstone 1992:86). These quotes clearly indicate the importance of the movement from object to consumption good. The acquisition that occurs in opportunity shops can be based on economic restrictions. This however is often not the only factor that relates to being an “op shopper”. The forms of discourse represented by the participation in opportunity shopping are being “time rich”, along with the having the ethic of recycling and “up-cycling”. I argue that op shopping is a very distinct form of consumption. The forms of acquisition within opportunity shops are those of consumptive skills that require time and can indicate a lack of financial resources. The objects are the remnants of contemporary material culture that have at once outlived their use value for one consumer. They continue to be visible indicators of consumerist society within the opportunity shops. The use-value of these goods can be seen to be indicative of several aspects. First, the original owner sees the potential of the good to be re-
commodified, secondly the good has not completely outlived its usefulness and lastly the ethic of recycling or “gifting” to those less well off, indeed a moment of charity, still has a place in twenty-first century society. As indicated by the discussion below, opportunity shops are thriving – even within a struggling national economy.

VW: So how would you define the re-store is it an op shop?
Tessa: I don’t like the term op shop at all I think it’s quite dated um but of course we will still use it. I would call it a recycling emporium because that’s what it is. Um yeah no we are we’re a second hand store but I mean even that doesn’t cover it because things can obviously be second third, fourth, fifth hand. So I think they quite antiquated terms for what we are. I think we are a recycling store we are a recycled goods store, whatever you want to call it and I think we are kind of the way of the future because stores like us are becoming increasing important as far as recycling goods right across the board and obviously for people that can’t afford new stuff in the first retail.
VW: Do you think there’s been an increase in?
Tessa: Oh absolutely, there’s been a real swing towards what we’re doing. Because of those reasons there’s been people that like shopping with us because it’s a necessity they cant afford household items and because they struggle they’re on low incomes and all the rest of it. We have people who just enjoy op shopping and just love pottering around which are brilliant as well but increasing the area that we are really picking up on are the people that like the environmental aspect of what we are doing. Instead of going and buying new stuff they are buying pre loved or second hand recycled stuff whatever you like so that appeals to them so that market is growing. People that can afford to buy new are shopping with us because they like the ethical part of it. So that’s growing.
VW: So you have noticed a trend.
Tessa: Oh yeah
VW: More people I know op shop now than ever before
Tessa: Yeah, absolutely. What I do notice in here is the diversity of people that come in. everyone from lawyers to young families to homeless people. I mean its just every one. And so that’s I think we are kind of unique in that respect that’s growing that more people are coming into the store (field notes Tessa 4.11.10).

The place of opportunity shops within late modern capitalism indicates an awareness of both the need and the ability to fundraise through these sites. This keeps them away from the form of
retail capitalism that they commonly try to imitate. Fund raising in this way contributes to the local economies of money and community. In the course of the research three new charity based opportunity shops opened in Dunedin. One of these sites, “The Shop On Carroll” a Presbyterian shop follows a formulaic retail site format, with goods are in regulated racks, and the site presented with distinctive marketing tools such as business logos, and goods then being sold with the logo attached. The goods in the site are hand picked for display and to make as much profit as is seen as reasonable for this organisation. The entire enterprise has a definite “up-market”, “up-scale” presentation. One op shopper expressed dismay that this sort of shop was designed so “real” op shoppers, or those people with limited financial circumstances were priced out of the market of “vintage” or “retro” clothes.

Consumer culture within these sites is separate to normative capitalist retail culture. As has been noted during the course of the thesis more and more people of a variety of social and economic backgrounds are now using op shops as sites of consumption. “... the identification of consumer culture as a specific form of material culture helps to ensure that it is studied in relation to interlinking cycles of production and consumption and reappropriation” (Lury 96:3). In this thesis I hope I have done just that in reference to the place of opportunity shopping and the associated consumptive practices it entails.

5.5 Conclusion

All of the sites within Dunedin are a combination of religiously based or charitable organisations with ties to wider community programmes. They all utilize funds raised within the shops to be used in the wider spheres of the organisations. Rather than simply being retail sites, opportunity shops are in fact creators of wealth. The basis for capitalism is the making of profit. The impetus behind opportunity shops however is much more diverse and complicated than just making profit. The majority of opportunity shops in Dunedin are sites of “fundraising” versus profit making ventures. As Gregson and Crewe so ably describe them “... charity retailing is grounded in an principle of exchange that is substituting fundraising for profit” (2003:53).

In the case of Dunedin opportunity shops provide not only cheap forms of alternative clothing and resources. They also play an important societal role and provide alternative arenas of consumption. The opportunity shops studied are more than shops and are places for social
gatherings, were shoppers can engage in conversations with each other and the staff. These social aspects of shopping occur in other venues, but it is very specific to the spaces of opportunity shops. The research has shown wide-ranging networking between the charities involved and in the wider community with their associated organisations. This is perhaps a part of the continuation of a charitable ethic that appears at odds with modern capitalism. I have found the physical presentation of the shops is very dependent on the personalities of the site managers, even with the process of professionalization that is currently being seen in Dunedin. Items of material culture that are present within these sites have a culturally re-adjusted value attributed to them. The sites could not exist without gifting on a large scale. That they have managed to co-exist with normative retail indicates a need for both. Many on low incomes do struggle financially and now people on middle incomes have come to share that struggle through the repercussions of the Global Financial Crisis and the national and local consequences of this.

Consumption is both a public and private act and the conversion of a store bought object into a personal possession. How others judge us is often in relation to our consumptive ability, such as through our clothing. One aspect of second hand consumption that was noticeable for its repeated appearance in conversations was the belief that if people purchased second hand clothing that the original owner may see them wearing their cast-offs. This is recognition of the idea of the “gift” retaining something of its owner, however misleading this perception may be in this society of mass-produced garments. Part of the culture surrounding “op” shopping seems to be the ability to acquire goods and then integrate them into the personal identity of the consumer – the re-appropriation of ownership. The process by which a possession passes from being simply a second hand item into an individual’s personal possession vary from simply being washed so they are “clean” and “new” or “new to you”, to altering objects to other uses. The rituals of ownership are as individual as the owners themselves.

The consumption that takes place in these sites is I think a combination of participation in modern consumer culture and an acknowledgement that not all can participate equally. Opportunity shops as specific businesses are in the business of providing funds for the social service aspects of their wider organisations. Although presented as retail outlets there is a major difference between a normative retail site and a charity retail outlet.

I hope I have shown in this chapter that the processes that differentiate opportunity shops as charity retail sites and profit driven retail shops. The gifting of goods is the formative difference
in these sites, but this reflects more than a separation in provisioning. Opportunity shops are based on the community spirited and charitable minded donation of items. Opportunity shops are distinct from being part of capitalism no matter how hard they try to erase the distinction.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

My thesis rests on the premise that opportunity shops are different from capitalist based shops. I contest that they are not part of capitalism but parallel to it. The means of provision for sale are based in the charitable ethic of donation. This alone takes them away from the capitalist equation of labour – production – profit. The provisioning of the goods is the start of the difference between opportunity shops and first cycle retail environments. The next division is in the provision of labour. Although this has changed over the course of the study to incorporate some paid staff, most labour in opportunity shops is still voluntary. The need to make a profit to pay labour then is negated. Profit is the last major distinction between the two - retail outlets exist purely to make profit but opportunity shops exist to raise funds. This distinction is by no means a small one. My observation during the last decade has seen a marked attempt by opportunity shops to present themselves as closer to first cycle retail. Using historical comparison as my starting point, I reviewed how the labelling of specific stock into gender and age areas has corrupted what is deemed to be a significant part of opportunity shopping – the hunt for treasure. I argue that this attempt is at best confusing and at worst has failed. The consumers of these sites are vocal in their opposition to this change. Predominately they share the view that the goods are all donated so an increase in price distracts from the charitable aspect of the sites. The inscription of greater value on second hand goods in this context has only widened the gap between first and second cycle, as Gregson and Crewe noted in the English context (2003). Opportunity shops are based on the continual over consumption of consumer items, items that have outlived their use-value to the original owners. In the context of this study consumption is the key to beginning and continuation of opportunity shops. I argue as Corrigan did that: “... consumption and not production is the central motor of contemporary society “(1997:1, underline my emphasis).

Certainly in the context of opportunity shops this is so. Unlike Corrigan (1997), however I do not base this on a Marxist ideology. My study is from the point of trying to interpret the key changes within this specific type of consumption in an anthropological context. To do this I have based my study on the place of the gift in contemporary shopping practice. Another important part of my study has been the people who have given me information on their perceptions and practices regarding opportunity shopping. They have led to a deeper understanding of the myriad of reasons and practices that are incorporated into this often overlooked realm of consumption. To participate in second hand consumption, specifically in charity based opportunity shops, is to
acknowledge that second hand is as good as new. The participation in this form of consumption however does not correlate to the shops themselves as being as good as new. This has been clearly revealed throughout the study. I have positioned my study within the wider context of an increase in the promotion of ethically based behaviours in society. This has been represented within the context of opportunity shops with the creation of re-useable bags.

In the case of opportunity shops the control of goods is in the hands of the donors, who choose what to keep and what to give, neither the managers nor the consumers in opportunity shops decide what is for sale. The workers and volunteers determine what however is to be sold. In this one respect the op shop workers have more control over their work environment than paid workers in a normative retail outlet. The goods are representations of material culture. “... consumption is subject to social control and political redefinition” and “... commodities are generally seen as typical material representations of the capitalist mode of production, even if they are classified as petty and their capitalist context is incipient” (Appadurai 86:6-7). The re-valuation of goods in this context is continuous; the gift of the good never stops giving. As discussed within the thesis the participants within opportunity shops are also frequently the donors. The circuitous nature of the opportunity shop was described in my introduction with the trajectories taken by my cardigan. Following on from Appadurai I suggest that opportunity shops are the physical manifestations of both regimes (1986:4) and tournaments of value (1986:21).

I argue here that gift exchange theory is also corrupted within the realm of opportunity shops; gifts are given then re-purchased to continue the cycle of re-use. Gifts given require no recompense in this instance. In the case of opportunity shops, which rely on the “gifting” of goods to remain in business the gift becomes the basis of production. Without the initial gift the shops would fail. In the course of the research it was discovered that donation by the anonymous public is not the only form of gifting that takes place. Many of the charity sites “gift” to one another. In the case of one of the larger sites they passed donations on to two smaller sites so they could stay open (Restore). A senior volunteer at one site who volunteered at another site also noted this reciprocity between sites. The practice of being a “professional” volunteer is not uncommon in Dunedin with volunteers working at more than one site of different charity organisations.

Opportunity shops are the result of economic inequalities and exist in a response against this – the provision of everyday goods that are charitably donated in order for the charity to raise funds.
The assumed result of this is that less fortunate people can afford to buy second-hand. Historically opportunity sites were places of cheap or free forms of acquisition for the poor. My contemporary account considers the change observed in the sites. Today people from across all socio-economic statuses shop in these sites. I suggest that the donation of goods positions opportunity shops within a larger political economy. It would seem then in order to fit into modern society we must all shop – regardless of our income levels. This is highlighted in the increasing rather than decreasing “need” for this type of shop to exist as indicated by the increasing presence of opportunity shops in Dunedin. What the case studies show quite clearly is that the participation in opportunity shops as places of consumption is dependent on having time available in order to shop in them. At the outset of my research none of the opportunity shops were open at weekends or during the normal business hours of 9am to 5pm. This has changed and opened up the participation in opportunity shops to all consumers, whether they are employed full time or not. This change also speaks to the larger changes in the socio-economic backgrounds of those who “op-shop”.

The ability to consume in opportunity shops is a form of economic consumption. The variety of goods seems to have grown over the years and with the size and locations of the different shops being either restrictive or encouraging of the sale of large items. This implies that even on low incomes it is normative for people to still be able to consume, even if that consumption is the remains of mass over consumption. As Douglas and Isherwood have said “Consumption is the very arena in which culture is fought over and licked into shape” (2001:37). The act of consuming in opportunity shops is a unique version of modern consumptive culture with its own rules and regulations. In the thesis I represent this, making clear that opportunity shopping is indeed separate from capitalist consumption being at once outside it and alongside, parallel as to it.

The variation in the presentation of the op shops within their larger organisations and within different sites does not negate their fundraising functions. The professionalization process highlights the fundamental differences in first versus second cycle retail. By trying to be more like a normative sites the opportunity shops have to try and fit with the presentation of first cycle sits. This cannot however be done with any consistency when the provision of goods is through donation. The lack of control over the donation and hence the production of goods takes opportunity shops a step further away from first cycle shops. This distinction cannot be overlooked when the charity shops try to emulate first cycle. When presentation of goods specific
to holidays or seasons is done, as in the case of Butterflies and St Vincent de Paul, there is a quiet grumble from regular consumers that this is an unfair practice. This was seen by some of my informants as negating the charitable aspect of donation by increasing the prices on some goods. I argue that the donation of goods is not itself an unfair practice, what is done with the donated goods can be construed as such though. This can be seen clearly in the practice of keeping aside (or out of specific sites), items of value. Having said this the value of donated goods is always arbitrary. My aim here has been to show that although opportunity shops are run as businesses within capitalist society they are highly specialised places of consumption and to try and detract from the very things that make them distinctive; the donation of both goods and labour; they instead make themselves look less than they are. The place of opportunity shops instead of declining in the modern capitalist era has increased. The business of opportunity shops appears to be doing a roaring trade as access to funds to shop in normative retail appears to be in decline. These sites straddle the sphere of consumerism and capitalism whilst being firmly embedded in the gift – exchange dichotomy. Perhaps I have had the thesis backward’s, maybe it is not the place of opportunity shops that have changed but our own need to consume mass marketed goods at any cost.
References:


Map from http://www.wises.co.nz/l/dunedin/#c/-45.873816/170.508928/14
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Appendices:

Appendix One: Questionnaire
Second-hand Consumption Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?
   - Female
   - Male

2. To which age group do you belong?
   - Under 20 years
   - 20-29 years
   - 30-39 years
   - 40-59 years
   - 60 or over

3. How would you describe your occupation?
   - Part time worker
   - Home maker
   - Full time worker
   - Beneficiary
   - Student

4. What is your current income level? (optional).
   - Under $10,000
   - $10–20,000
   - $20–30,000
   - $30–40,000
   - $40–45,000 or above

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9. Where do you prefer to shop?

   Salvation Army Family Stores
   Saint Vincent de Paul shops
   Privately owned shops
   Other or a combination of the above (please specify).

10. Are there specific days that you choose to shop in opportunity shops?
    
    Yes
    No

11. If you answered yes to question ten (10), what reason do you most closely identify with?
    
    Because of child care arrangements?
    Because it is your pay day?
    Because you meet with friends on this day?
    Bus timetables?

12. If you shop with other people, are they...
    
    friends?
    family members?
    your partner?
    or do you shop by yourself?
5. Have you ever been opportunity shopping?
   Yes  
   No  

6. How did you start opportunity shopping?
   Because of economic need?  
   With your friends?  
   With family members?  
   Because of a specific interest? Please specify

7. What types of goods do you buy when opportunity shopping?
   Clothing  
   Kitchen items  
   Furniture  
   Other: please specify

8. If you use opportunity shops which ones do you use?
   South Dunedin opportunity shops only  
   Opportunity shops within Dunedin  
   Other or a combination of both (please specify)
13. On average how much time would you spend in each store?

15 minutes or less
Half an hour
45 minutes
Longer

14. What form of transport do you use?

Bus
Private car
Walking
Bicycle

15. Have you ever donated clothing or other goods to an opportunity shop?

Yes
No

16. Do you know any of the workers in the opportunity shops personally?

Yes
No

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17. Have you ever volunteered to work in an opportunity shop?
   Yes
   No

18. Do you combine opportunity shopping with other retail activities?
   Yes
   No

19. Do you see opportunity shopping as...
   an alternative form of shopping?
   somewhere to go to find a bargain?
   part of your normal shopping routine?
   something other people do?

20. Would you usually buy something every time you went opportunity shopping?
   Yes
   No
Appendix Two: Ethical Consent
Assoc. Prof. J Leckie  
Department of Anthropology, Gender & Sociology  
Division of Humanities  

29 September 2010

Dear Assoc. Prof. Leckie,

I am again writing to you concerning your proposal entitled "Opportunist Consumption; an Alternative to Capitalism", Ethics Committee reference number F10/010.

Thank you for sending to me the amended copies of the Information Sheet and Consent Form.

On the basis of this response, I am pleased to confirm that the proposal now has full ethical approval to proceed.

Approval is for up to three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, re-approval must be requested. If the nature, consent, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise me in writing.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Mr Gary Witte  
Manager, Academic Committees  
Tel: 479 8256  
Email: gary.witte@otago.ac.nz

cc. Department of Anthropology, Gender & Sociology
Appendix Three: Consent and information sheet

Reference Number F10/010
30 August 2010

Opportunist Consumption: An Alternative to Capitalism

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of this Project?

This project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Anthropology. The primary aim of this project is to investigate second hand shopping in New Zealand society by exploring the roles of opportunity shops and consumers. It will explore the motivations behind op-shopping, donating goods to op-shops and volunteering in op-shops.

We are seeking participants involved in second hand shopping. These individuals include consumers and volunteers in second hand shops.

What will you be asked to do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview of approximately 60 minutes duration. The interview will be audio-recorded. Open ended questions will be asked (i.e. questions which involve more than yes/no answers). You can choose what questions to answer, and how to answer them. If you feel discomfort or hesitation, you may choose not to answer a question. If for any reason the interview becomes distressing you may choose not to continue with the interview at any time. Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?

The information collected will be that which you offer in response to interview questions. Interviews will be transcribed and analyzed after which relevant parts of the interview may be used in the MA thesis and in resulting publications. This project involves an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on how the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.
Although specific questions will arise through the course of the interview process, the following broad topics provide a guide to the types of questions that are of central interest:

- What motivates you to “op-shop”?
- How would you describe your occupation?
- How did you start opportunity shopping?
- What types of goods do you buy when you ’op shop’/
- Do you shop with others?
- Where do you prefer to shop?
- Have you ever donated goods to opportunity shops?

If the line of questioning develops in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular questions.

The purpose of this data collection is to document the behaviours associated with opportunity shopping. In addition to this an historical comparison will be made with prior research on this topic.

The interviews will be conducted by Valerie Wilson who will audio-record the interview and take notes. Only Valerie Wilson and her supervisor will have access to the completed transcripts and notes. The results of the project may be published. Every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity. You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity.

The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on how the interview develops. Although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

If the questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular questions and that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself.

**Can You (as a Participant) Change Your Mind and Withdraw from the Project?**

Yes.

**Your anonymity**
Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. You will be asked for a pseudonym to preserve anonymity. All interview sessions will be treated in the strictest confidence. You may request a transcript of the interview that you can amend.

**If You have any Questions?**
If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:
Valerie Wilson or Assoc Prof Dr Jacqueline Leckie
Department of Anthropology, Gender & Sociology
University Telephone Number: 64 479 8760 or leave a message with Marjorie or Bronwyn at 4798791

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Opportunist Consumption: An Alternative to Capitalism.

CONSENT FORM FOR

PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.
I know that:-
1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information [audio-tapes] will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which they will be destroyed;
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes questions such as:
   - What motivates you to “op-shop”?
   - How would you describe your occupation?
   - How did you start opportunity shopping?
   - What types of goods do you buy when you ‘op shop’
   - Do you shop with others?
   - Where do you prefer to shop?
   - Have you ever donated goods to opportunity shops?
   The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.
5. If I feel any discomfort or risk to myself during this process, I have the right to withdraw from this project.
6. My participation in this research is voluntary and will not be used for any commercial purposes.
7. The results of the project will be included in a written MA thesis and may be published as articles in academic journals, presented at conferences and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.
This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix Four: Mesh block areas:
The mesh block areas utilised in the questionnaire were from the 1996 Statistics New Zealand Census survey and are as follows:
2928500, 2928600, 2928700, 2928800, 2928900, 2932300, 2932400.
The actual boundaries for the mesh areas are: MacAndrew Road, Kirkcaldy Street, Bayview Road and Great King Edward Street.
Appendix Five: permission

Mission statement from freecycle.org, permission for use granted 4.4.12 from Deron Beal Executive Director.

“Our mission is to build a worldwide gifting movement that reduces waste, saves precious resources & eases the burden on our landfills while enabling our members to benefit from the strength of a larger community”.