HANGING OUT AND THE MALL: PRODUCTION OF AN ADOLESCENT SOCIAL SPACE
HANGING OUT AND THE MALL
THE PRODUCTION OF AN ADOLESCENT SOCIAL SPACE

By

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A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University

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MASTER OF ARTS (1997) (Sociology)

McMaster University Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Hanging Out and the Mall: The Production of an Adolescent Social Space

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NUMBER OF PAGES: ix, 154
Abstract

The thesis uses the adolescent activity of hanging out at shopping malls to explore the social production of space. The mall is considered as a strategically constructed place, permeated by the imperative to purchase, and marketed as a (quasi) public space. Unlike the home, school and workplace, the mall affords teenagers a measure of freedom. However, in order to use the mall, adolescents must negotiate a number of obstacles which stem from their ambivalent relationship with the setting. Malls are simultaneously welcoming (providing a safe environment and targeting teenagers as a niche market) and hostile (regarding the group presence of teenagers as a threat to safety and order). Hanging out, comprising a range of meanings and pursuits, is examined as the tactical practice of movement—as shopping, loitering, watching the crowd—which is both facilitated and constrained by the strategies of the mall. Hanging out implicates teenagers in the (re)production of the mall and its attending structures and discourses. Yet at the same time, by taking advantage of the contradictions opened up by the setting's ambivalence, teenagers temporarily transform the official place of the mall, individually and collectively producing a space of their own. Thus, the thesis examines the intersection of the commercial, controlled and potentially public setting of the mall, with the interactive, consumptive and transgressive activities of teenagers, in order to capture how social structures converge with social
practices to produce social space. As such, the work transcends the specificity of teenage social activities to address the underlying problem of public space in contemporary society, and the overarching issue of the intersection of spatial forms and social practices.
Preface and Acknowledgments

The prohibition against the use of the word "I" in the critical or theoretical text is a curious restriction, not completely unlike those literary games of *Oulipo* where, for example, an entire text must be written with the systematic suppression of the letter "e." But while the latter seeks a sheerly aesthetic effect, the former reveals a certain moral or psychological, if not metaphysical, imperative. Is it the expression of the author's narcissism that is feared, or could it rather be the very inauguration of a more subtle ontological disturbance that is to be avoided?

Allen Weiss

Research questions, unlike Athena, do not spring fully formed from the head of their creators. They are borne by experience and interest, bias and aversion. It seems appropriate to begin here, in this vestige of the academic "I" with a few recollections that, I hope, will provide the reader with the researcher's context and not dissolve into gratuitous auto-ethnography.

First and foremost, I am a cityphile. This has arisen primarily through imaginings rather than experience. Growing up in Northern Ontario, I spent the first eighteen years of my life knowing very little of Toronto, the urban mecca of school field trips and semi-annual family shopping trips. Until midway through my teenage years, Toronto had been synonymous with, if not encapsulated within, the Eaton's Centre. In my young mind, Eaton's represented everything sophisticated about a "real" city.
It has struck me throughout the course of this research that, in many ways, I led a very different adolescent life from those I interviewed. For me, the mall was a poor collection of stores where, near the end of high school and much to my surprise, my father would walk during the winter for comfort-controlled exercise. I came to the mall as a social place late in life, having missed the rituals of the food court, the misadventures with security guards, the tales of the secret life of mall rats. It has also struck me, though, that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Whether it is at a mall, a convenience store or a farmer's field, the underlying patterns and motivation for teenage socializing still ring true to my own experiences.

Perhaps because of my extended role as the tourist in cities, I tend to be interested in what might be considered the banal activities of everyday life. What has proven to be the most rewarding aspect of this research is getting individuals to question those activities, and to see that what is most ordinary is also most ordering. The common is very often lost to inspection through the hypnotic trance of the everyday routine. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of the teenagers who donated their time to talk to me about their everyday lives in the mall, and to “escape the hypnotic.”² It is my hope that they will recognize themselves in the following pages, although it is likely that they will find the theoretical passages impassable. It has been a difficult task, analytically carving up their words, and my only solace is that the complexities of everyday life are never captured wholly and so the following is one of many possible readings of their words. This should be the solace of the researcher,
and not the bane of her project, as the role of the cataloguer and analyst is too often an oppressive one.

There are a number of other individuals who deserve recognition for their contributions to the thesis. I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee, Dr. Graham Knight, Dr. Peter Donnelly, and Dr. William Shaffir for their support, invaluable suggestions and good humor throughout the course of the research. It is in large part due to the latitude they have allowed me that the thesis has been an enjoyable and rewarding enterprise. I am especially indebted to Graham Knight, whose role in my academic growth is of inestimable importance. Our many discussions resulted in a work of which I am very proud. As an advisor, friend and proponent of the less-trodden paths of sociology, he has reaffirmed my belief in the potential of academics to be useful, relevant and interesting.

Jeff Pinto and Alison Blair deserve special credit for their generous gifts of time and energy. They have been kind critics and diligent editors, and I am grateful for their sharp wits and unflagging support.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their encouragement, strength, and understanding over the years. My parents have instilled in me the belief that success is a matter of commitment and determination. They have been exemplary role models.

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Their story begins on the ground level, with footsteps. They are the myriad, but do not compose a series. ...Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of those “real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city.” They are not localized; it is rather they that spatialize.

Michel de Certeau

The thesis begins at the shopping mall, the urban(e) staple of contemporary landscapes. Filled with carbon-copy chain stores, ubiquitous greenery (real and otherwise) and floor plan directories, malls erase all traces of geographical location. Standard fare, also, are the teenagers, hanging out in the requisite food court and cruising the corridors, looking as much at products as at the crowd. These quotidian features produce a certain sense of familiarity; one never really leaves the local mall.

Shopping malls and the adolescents in them share the status of being objects of derision. Critics of malls deride them as crass vehicles of capitalism, which destroy the urban fabric by turning downtowns into ghost towns. This intellectual snobbery serves to perpetuate the false distinction between “high” and “popular” culture, and does little to recognize the merits of malls and the contributions they make.

On the other hand, the teenage presence in malls is most often denigrated by other mall patrons, who regard their extended stay in the mall as a sign of a
directionless generation with too much time on its hands. While this generalization may be fitting in cases, it fails to recognize the necessity of a space for peer socialization, and the lack of alternatives. Requiring a space outside of the realms of home, school or work (in which adult supervision is explicit), adolescents turn to public space just as adults do. However, the presence of teenagers is greeted with begrudging tolerance, wary suspicion, and outright exclusion. The alternatives to the mall include traditional sites of social gathering, which do not have an explicit age requirement—parks, streets, city squares. These sites are increasingly scarce and/or untenable because of lack of access, lack of maintenance funds, prohibitive user fees, and the localization of urban crime and fear of crime within these areas. Youth or recreational centers are similarly limited due to a lack of municipal resources. As well, the Canadian climate makes outdoor gathering a seasonal option; from early November to late April, hanging out in the great outdoors takes a decidedly unpleasant turn with the cold, snow and rain.

Thus teenagers have an ambivalent relationship with shopping malls, being unwelcome bodies in one of the more viable options for gathering with peers. This ambivalence stems from the particular age group, the uses they make of the mall, and from the nature of the mall itself. Firstly, adolescence is generally an awkward liminal stage in a society which increasingly demonizes the transition from the innocence of childhood to the fully indoctrinated and appropriate realm of adulthood. Teenagers are considered to be troubled and troubling, an attitude which often rests on the group presence of adolescents. Thus, the stereotype of teenagers aids in the construction of boundaries that
naturalize public space as adult space, and serve to potentially exclude teenagers from the spaces they require as forums for socialization.

Secondly, adolescents use or are perceived to use the mall primarily as a site of social activity and not, as shopping malls would like, as sites of commodity consumption. While malls open themselves to the public as places to gather and meet others, this is a concession in the overriding drive to generate purchases. Thus those activities which threaten to eclipse the commercial agenda are deemed transgressive and are subject to differing levels of tolerance.

Finally, the ambivalent relationship between teens and malls stems in part from the place itself. Malls suffer from a crisis in identity; they are private, commercial places which evoke the concept of public space as a marketing ploy, if not as an effort to integrate themselves into the community in a socially beneficial manner. Given the increasing dearth of public spaces in contemporary urban settings, malls draw on a collective and often nostalgic desire for such spaces. Jon Goss has called this “otherwheritis, the spatial equivalent of nostalgia.” Thus malls are torn between private and public, transaction and interaction. Teenagers highlight this tension via their overt social uses of the mall.

The thesis is concerned specifically with the ways in which teenagers use the shopping mall as a locus of everyday activities. This entails questions of how individuals negotiate and construct meaning in physical places, thereby socially producing a space via actions and meanings, both sanctioned and contested. The ways in which individuals use urban space, as a setting for
everyday life, mark the intersection between the spatial organization of social life and the social organization of spatial forms. An investigation of the social production of space—specifically, of an adolescent space—requires that the notion of space be taken broadly, encapsulating both the physical setting and the attendant methods and discourses of control, organization and meaning. How individuals “do everyday life” is then situated in the nexus between architecture and action, physical place and social interaction.

- the problematic of public space -

Underlying the investigation is the issue of public space, as it is only though a recognition of how public space is made public by the public that we can grasp the broader relevance of the question, “How do adolescents use the mall?”

The task of definition is a difficult one as the concept of public space is fraught with ambivalence; the notion of public evokes inclusiveness, while the reality of a space is predicated on exclusion. Definitions tend to fall within these two camps: an unrestrained and inclusive space, or a restrained and exclusive space, both of which reference a non-existent ideal. The difficulty with the first definition is that “the public” is never a wholly inclusive body; to be public presupposes access to a private sphere. In this way, homeless individuals, lacking the possession of a private space, are excluded from the public. In the same way, the lack of ownership of, and restriction to the private sphere of the home have historically excluded women from the public. Less pronounced yet similar difficulties face teenagers, making theirs a marginal presence in public space. Despite these exclusions, the notion of
public space as inclusive is one that tolerates difference and its subsequent disorder. It serves as a normative definition that closely approximates, or is synonymous with the ideal of public space.⁴

The second definition seems more of a recognition and description of what form public space actually takes—that of a controlled, regulated and thus exclusionary space. The difficulty here is that such a definition still makes reference to an ideal which it has no hope of approximating. This, generally, is the problem with public space; it resides in our collective memories as an ideal, but the ideal is an impossible one. The Greek Agora, no longer fashionable as an exemplar of public space in academic discussions, is still the popular icon of a golden age of public freedom. Of course, this is a deeply flawed icon as the Agora excluded all non-male, non-property owning individuals, and did so by including only citizens.

An unattainable ideal of public space fosters the sneering attitude and delusional nostalgia of critics of malls and other such spaces which make overtures to the idea of ‘public.’ Complete inclusion is unlikely given the level of tolerance required. We may dream of a tolerant space, but once in it, we do not want to be disturbed. More importantly, such inclusion is an impossibility in that space is always constructed via boundaries, by and through exclusions. Thus, one must abandon the ideal as it is a faulty measure, and judge public places not on their verisimilitude to an impossible ideal, but by their effects, opportunities and potentialities for individuals.⁵ Such a judgment is required as the shifting nature of public space puts increasing onus on individuals to make the space public. Public spaces, and spaces that evoke a nostalgia for public
space, should be judged by the possibilities they allow for. Communal spaces facilitate the development of meanings of community. Public space is both necessary, and worthy of critical attention concerning its state today.

Where, then, do we locate public space if not via an ideal? Through the tension between inclusion and exclusion, between the ideal and the real; through the social practice of public space. We must acknowledge that the tension between inclusion and exclusion is a mediated tension, impacting on different strata of the urban populace to differing degrees. The stratification of social groups, via identity and social status, is reproduced in and by the stratification of social space. Access to public space is hierarchically and ambivalently distributed, shifting according to particular instances of use and identity. Thus, the upper class may have greater access by virtue of their wealth, but are equally if not more constrained with respect to their practices in public space. There are unlimited permutations of the relationship between the individual or group, and social space. Over time, in different situations, the same individual may be owner, intruder, guest or captive.

An investigation of space, public or not, must recognize the ambivalence inherent in its structure in order to appreciate the opportunities made available by those contradictions. In this way we may define public space as a practiced place (to use Michel de Certeau's terminology\(^\text{9}\)), or a transition from representations of space to representational space (from Henri Lefebvre\(^\text{7}\)).

- **shopping malls as public space**

Shopping malls are, fundamentally, private places. As such, the owners and administrators have the right to structure the mall according to their
commercial interests. Thus, certain individuals and activities are not welcomed—and sometimes banned—if they interfere with that commercial agenda. Malls, then, might best be said to be quasi-public; they are open to the public and offer freedom to interact, but this is within a privately controlled framework. However, public spaces of all kinds are naturalized to include certain behaviors and bodies. Malls are no less—but may be more—stratified than the traditional public settings of parks, streets and city squares.

Exclusionary and controlling practices, however, should not lead to a deterministic view of the structure of places. It is a gross underestimation of the agency of individuals to presume that their meanings and actions are wholly scripted by the official discourses and hierarchies within which they find themselves situated. It is also a gross disservice to individuals to point to the creative means by which individual meanings and discourses may be interjected, and end the discussion there. Research on the social production of space should not be a pardon from constructing and maintaining more flexible and tolerant places. In interrogating the obstacles and opportunities presented by the settings of everyday life, the research should point to how we might better make our places public, on both institutional and personal levels.

Shopping malls may appear to be yet another banal example of the rampant consumer culture of contemporary Western society. Furthermore, they may be labeled as a mode of escape from everyday life which “only succeeds in further trivializing everyday life,” and detracting energy from efforts to “make the world of everyday life a more meaningful and hospitable place to live.” This is a mistaken conception and, moreover, a problematic
dismissal of what is a *site* of everyday life, and not necessarily an escape from it. The mall points to a shift in where everyday life is to be located, which stems from an escalating interiorization of public life in the face of traditional public spaces being constructed as dangerous. This raises a number of questions regarding what actually takes place within the mall, in conjunction with and in opposition to its private, commercial agenda.

• *hanging out* •

Hanging out at the mall is one of the quintessential activities of urban adolescent life and, like other everyday practices, it is often difficult for the practitioners to articulate. The thesis takes hanging out as a composite of a variety of pursuits. By way of introduction:

The whole point of the mall is to go, hang out, look for shoes, meet girls.

male, 17 (R.11)

How do you define hanging out? You sit there, and you’re not specifically doing anything. But you can’t, like, well I guess my definition of hanging out is not...it’s like staying stationary, know what I mean? You’re hanging out.

female, 18 (R.16)

Most of the time, it’s just, like, sit there and talk. Go to the arcade.

female, 18 (R.15)

Male: Most often, I just go to hang out.
Female: Well, he shops periodically throughout his hanging out.
Male: Yeah. We’ll go window shopping. Like, we used to get bored and we used to cruise the mall. You know, we’d go, we’d look and see what we wanted.

male, 18 (R.28); female, 18 (R.27)
This is not to suggest that the mall is always/only defined as a social hang out. In fact, the role of the mall in adolescent social interaction shifts markedly through time. Uses of the mall differ depending on the time of day and day of the week; more importantly, the role of the mall changes as teenagers approach adulthood. Younger teenagers place a greater emphasis on group activities in the mall, whereas older teenagers more often use the mall for shopping and less as a hang out.

An exploration of hanging out in the mall involves the tactics by which teenagers make the mall a public setting, thereby opening up space for personal and social meanings and interactions. It is an attempt to understand the “art of living in the other’s field” in a manner that transcends the specificity of teenage social activities to address the underlying issue of the state of public space in contemporary urban centers. Also addressed is the overarching question of how the social production of space marks the junction of an officially constructed and organized setting with the social practices that go on within and through that setting.

• plan of the work •

The thesis proceeds with an overview of the relevant substantive and theoretical literature, with special attention being given to the contributions made by the area of the sociology of space, and how the literature on youth cultures informs those concerns. The methodology is also outlined in Chapter 2, as are the role of the researcher and ethical issues.

Chapter 3 considers the mall setting as an officially constructed place, thus providing the first component of an understanding of what it is that
teenagers are negotiating. In particular, the Chapter discusses the dual concerns of law and order within the mall as attempts to construct a place of constancy and control, and the implication of teenagers in their reproduction and transformation. Underlying the control of the mall is the desire for public space, and, more broadly, the desire to consume.

Having considered the mall as representations of space, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 examine the tactics by which the mall is transformed into representational space. Moving from the sanctioned activity of shopping in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 considers the more transgressive element of loitering in the activity of hanging out. Chapter 6 considers the role of the crowd in the mall, and the ways in which adolescents use the crowd; this highlights the fundamental and integrating practice of movement.

Finally, the conclusion reviews the findings of the research and highlights the predominant concerns and concepts. Reflections on the methodological design of the thesis, and implications of the work for future research and the relevant bodies of theory will also be discussed.

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4 For public space as normative, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category*, trans. T. Burger with F. Lawrence (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1989).
9 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*
8 Numbers in parantheses refer to interview codes, found in Appendix A.
Substantive, Conceptual and Methodological Considerations

In short, space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers.

Michel de Certeau

It is the acid of profane cultures which eats away the bourgeois scales from the commonplace.

Paul Willis

Jerry Jacobs, in his 1984 study of malls, noted that “while there are approximately 23,000 shopping malls in the United States, catering to millions of persons, there was not a single social science book that dealt with the topic.” Of the substantive work done since then, there has been considerable attention paid to the setting itself: how malls are built and managed, what their common features are, how shopping is promoted, and, on the level of interaction, how people shop. The notion that malls are problematic as social, public space because of their commercial agenda has been left largely undeveloped, and this may explain to some extent the lack of attention given to non-commercial activities within the mall. The thesis attempts to redress the gap in the substantive literature by focusing on the range of activities teenagers pursue in the mall.

An investigation of the production of a social space requires attention to the particular obstacles, restrictions and discourses which structure the setting. In the case of adolescents, the stratification of space along age-
specific lines is of particular importance. Thus, the thesis employs a theoretical approach which integrates two broad rubrics of theory: space and youth. As such, it stands to make a contribution to the broad body of writings on the sociology of space by informing them with the concerns of the sociology of youth.

The Chapter reviews the relevant substantive literature on the development, commercial agenda and quasi-public status of malls, the experience of shopping and shopping malls, and the position(ing) of teenagers in today's society. Following this review is a consideration of the relevant theoretical material, considered under the broad categories of space and youth, with a brief discussion of theoretical boundaries and concerns as they pertain to subcultures, resistance and gender. Finally, an overview of the methodological approach of the thesis is presented.

*review of substantive literature*

While Jacob's ethnography remains the only book length study, a number of essays on shopping malls have appeared. In them, concerns about the built environment and the activities within are addressed, the former much more fully than the latter. By and large, the work has been done within the fields of sociology, geography and communications and has been characterized by certain recurring themes. The historical antecedents, commercial nature, and quasi-public role of malls have been developed, as have, to a lesser extent, the activity of shopping in everyday life, people's experiences of malls (including those of teenagers), and the specific issue of teenagers in contemporary society.
While precursors to the mall as a building type may be located in the Agora and bazaars of ancient times, the birthplace of the architectural form in modern times is more properly located in 19th Century Paris and England, where a large number of arcades--covered streets that combined stores with residences--were built. Johann Geist's monumental *Arcades: The History of a Building Type* details the evolution of the arcade and its public and private roles. Arcades were controlled and policed environments, protected from the harsher elements of the external climate and street life. While open to all classes, the experience of the arcade space was quite different depending on social status. Whereas the bourgeoisie could "display themselves, and...marvel at the products of the blooming luxury industry," the working class had little means of buying, trying or displaying such signs of status.

As arcades developed, the residential component gradually waned until the building type transformed into the modern department store. Malls, preserving the variety of vendors of the arcade, and the scope of the department store, have taken many forms, including pedestrian malls, strip malls and plazas. The type of mall most prevalent today is the fully enclosed shopping mall, the first of which appeared in 1956 outside of Minneapolis, which is now the home of The Mall of America, the world's largest fully enclosed shopping center. Jacobs discusses this progression, as do others, as a means of contextualizing the mall via its history.

Often tied to a consideration of the historical evolution of the mall is the consideration of the increasing interiorization of public life. As street life continues to move indoors, in malls and in pedestrian walkways, it becomes
progressively sterilized as the private agenda of the places filters out those natural elements and individuals deemed undesirable from a commercial point of view. Indeed, all that is left of “nature” in the mall is the light coming in through occasional skylights. While a petting zoo is not an uncommon special attraction in malls, a stray bird in the rafters seems an alien, unnatural animal.

Recognition of the neutralizing effect of shopping malls rests on the second theme of the studies: the commercial nature of the mall. While the fact that malls are centers of commerce is obvious, the implications for the social interaction within them are not. The commercial agenda and private nature of the mall allow management and security forces to limit who and what is in the mall by “constraining, monitoring, homogenizing and filtering out the already low level of acceptable difference in everyday life.” But the control of space is not solely a matter of limits; control can also be positive, enabling and promoting certain activities, such as shopping. The impact of private interests on those who wish to use the mall must be recognized. That is, the overarching commercial agenda is often inextricably bound up in the social activities that go on in the mall. Thus, shopping becomes a social activity; moreover, it becomes a prerequisite to pursuing other social activities in the mall. While this issue, and the next, remain somewhat undeveloped in the literature, it appears in some guise in all of the studies encountered.

The third theme, the quasi-public nature of the mall, develops logically from the first two. As the latest manifestation of a space which has balanced public and private interests, and has increasingly favored the latter, the mall
provides a setting that resembles public space, but has a number of severe limitations owing to the commercial agenda. In their efforts to maintain an environment which promotes purchasing, many malls have banned protesters and canvassers, homeless individuals, and so forth, as well as discouraging loitering. In fact, the right of free speech in malls has been largely absent. In the United States, only six states guarantee the right of free speech in malls, the most recent ruling being in New Jersey. In 1994, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that shopping malls' predominant characteristic of use is its inclusiveness, even though the primary use is commercial, making malls a close approximation of public space. The results, however, have not been as great as suggested in the initial ruling, which states that the "flow of free speech in today's society is too important to be cut off simply to enhance the shopping ambiance." The court left it to the individual malls to establish the limits for free speech, meaning that malls still fall far short of a democratic ideal. These limits, placed on a setting which promotes itself as a social arena, raise questions concerning how closely malls really do approximate traditional public places.

The activity of shopping in everyday life has received examination via an interactionist perspective, which ties into a larger body of theory on consumer culture and the role shopping plays in lifestyles. Of interest to the thesis are the ethnographic accounts, particularly those of Robert Prus, which examine how shopping can be both a pleasurable and laborious task, and the role of companions in the activity of shopping. With the focus of the thesis being on the social aspect of shopping malls--and thus of shopping--the notion
that the consumer can participate in shopping as a conscious choice for leisure activity is a relevant one, and requires recognition of shopping as more than a necessary activity. This recognition tends to go missing within statistical analyses of consumption; Statistics Canada's 1995 report, *As Time Goes By... Time Use of Canadians*, for example, includes shopping only as a category of household work and related activities, and is completely absent from leisure or social activities. What is more often the case with respect to youth, shopping is very much a social activity; shopping with friends, emphasizes social interaction as much or more so than transaction. Here, the role of companions in discouraging or facilitating purchases--how advice and personal shopping styles may hinder or help--highlights the motivations behind particular shopping practices within a social context.

Taking the mall more generally as a multi-purpose site--and not simply as a place for purchasing--leads to the fifth theme: people's experience of shopping malls. The mall's function as a site, and source, of pleasure and leisure is a recurrent, if not undeveloped, theme in the literature. The controlled environment and social milieu of malls attracts a number of groups, including the elderly and the unemployed, who are motivated in part by boredom and the need to 'kill time.' Jacobs discusses the different groups of people present in the malls that he examined; among them are teenagers, who spent considerable amounts of time after school and on weekends hanging out at the mall, suggesting the role of the mall as a center for teenage social life. Jacobs discusses a number of activities and concerns central to the teenagers' use of the mall, including the nature of their conversations in the mall, the objects
they tend to buy, the reasons for visiting the mall, the experience of going to the mall alone as opposed to with a group, and the activity of “cruising,” or looking for dates. While these are all fruitful points of his investigation, Jacobs fails to address the relationship between the teenagers and the larger mall environment; while he notes that the decorum of teens can be problematic, particularly in the case of those found in the arcade, he does not recognize the contradictions of hanging out—often synonymous with loitering—in a setting that requires the movement of both consumers and commodities.

The final theme by which the thesis is related to other substantive work is that of the issue of teenagers in contemporary society. As Mats Lieberg has noted, teenagers, unlike adults, “have no obvious right to spaces of their own;” school, work and home are all places under adult supervision. For this and other reasons, adolescents utilize shopping malls as one of their primary sites for public life; in doing so, however, they face the obstacles presented to their particular age group. Gill Valentine, in her article on the social construction of public space, argues that through the repetitive acts of parents, media and educators, public space has been “produced within a regulatory framework as an adult space to such an extent that [it] is assumed to be “naturally” or is taken for granted as the realm of grown-ups.” Valentine points to the representations of ‘stranger danger,’ young children as endangered, teenagers as transgressive, and the vilification of the male body as instrumental in the process whereby public space becomes the realm of adults, prompting teenagers to find means of circumventing the order imposed on them.
The construction of teenagers as troubling and troubled is considered more generally by Julian Tanner, who proposes that the social construction of adolescence has been tied to and framed by the issue of delinquency from its onset. This gives rise to stereotypes of youth which are, like Valentine's notion of public space, naturalized via academic writings, public debate and the media, and exacerbated through shifting social conditions and anxieties. In general, the discourses surrounding adolescence, particularly in the media, "exaggerate and sensationalize events and situations, often presenting atypical cases as representative, and in so doing, they construct a problematic image of youth that does not always correspond to actual behaviour." This problematic image is especially associated with youth in groups, often presented in the media as "gangs" or "swarms." A 1992 national survey of Canadian teenagers attests to the impact of such stereotypes. Not only are teenagers aware of the stereotypes, they are frustrated by them, and by the underlying reticence of adults to treat adolescents as responsible, contributing members of society rather than as half human (as if "half child + half adult = half human").

From the relevant substantive literature we have the fragments of what will become a more comprehensive, integrated picture of the adolescent presence in shopping malls. An integrated analysis must appreciate the commercial, controlled and potentially public nature of the setting, the interactive, consumptive, and transgressive activities that go on within that setting, and the larger discourses of consumerism and teenage delinquency in order to capture how social structures intersect with social practices to
produce social space. To accomplish such an analysis, a broad scope of theoretical works is required, framed generally as those related to space and to youth.

• review of conceptual literature •

The answer to the broad question of what teenagers do in the mall lies at the junction of structures and practices. With this in mind, the thesis is located within the field of Cultural Studies, which regards the intersection of structural determinants and the social construction of meaning as crucial. While individuals may pursue activities and create meanings, they do so within a framework of particular structures which both constrain and facilitate those activities, in turn affecting the structures of everyday life.

Cultural Studies has demonstrated a stubborn refusal to define itself, hoping to preserve an openness that would otherwise be threatened by rigid theoretical and methodological boundaries. While the field may lack a definition, it is not without a history which points to recurrent themes and broad concerns. Arguably, the dominant paradigm in Cultural Studies, as outlined by Stuart Hall, is the concept of “culture as interwoven with all social practices” which, in turn, are conceptualized “as a common form of human activity: sensuous human praxis, the activity through which men and women make history.”27 Culture, then, is both symbolic and material; a way of life and the forms of life, raising a concern with, not only the content of everyday practices, but their means and motivation as well. Bridging the gap between an empirical and a theoretical approach to studying the social world, Cultural Studies has generally conceived itself in political terms. It is concerned broadly
with transformation and empowerment via social research. With a recognition of both structures and practices comes an overriding interest in human agency as it asserts itself within, through and against structural determinants.

Having located the thesis within an interdisciplinary approach, two theoretical rubrics come into focus: that of space (providing the context within which, and the relationship through which, individuals intersect with the settings of everyday life), and that of youth (recognizing the particular relevance of the construction of deviance and delinquency). If we recognize that space is stratified in a way that (re)produces the stratification of society, then it becomes apparent how the study of youth can inform the study of space. The abstract notion of space, as accomplished through exclusions and boundaries, may be examined via the concrete ways in which individuals—teenagers—experience the hierarchies of access and use. The social status of teenagers shifts markedly if they appear alone or in small groups (identified as non-threatening), or in large groups (identified as a cause for concern). These theoretical issues draw attention to and facilitate an analysis of the impact of the stratification of space on the ways in which teenagers are able to use the mall.

* contemporary perspectives on space

As discussed in the introduction, the thesis takes public, or social, space as the practice of place (referring to de Certeau) which accomplishes the transformation of Lefebvre's representations of space to representational space. While often used interchangeably, the distinction between place and
Space as developed by de Certeau provides the starting point for a recognition of the inherent social character of space.

A place (*lieu*) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships or coexistence. ...A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability. A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. ...It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities. ...In short, *space is a practiced place.*

Space, then, is much more than the passive container of social life. The hierarchical ordering of place is predicated on the ordering of the relations between individuals. The practice of space opens place to the transformative potential of social interaction. This marks the rejection of the dichotomy of space and society of an earlier era of spatial theorizing, and moves towards a general theory of space. This sentiment is echoed in the works of both Walter Benjamin and Lefebvre.

Benjamin is concerned with the social, spatial and temporal organization of cities, and how these permeate each other to produce a state of “porosity”. Porosity makes it impossible to draw clear boundaries between phenomena, while drawing attention to the interpenetrations of spheres and forms (of public and private, interior and exterior), to what is hidden within those permeations, and to “the indeterminate, improvised character of everyday life as dramatic performance.” One must interrogate not only the stage and the actors, but also their interrelations.
Porosity, or considered another way, the ambivalence, of places opens them to the transformation to space. To return to the question of public space, it is the permeation of public places, with references to a private sphere and an exclusive public body, that provide its moments of ambivalence and opportunities for practice. Alternatively, in the controlled and scripted environment of the (private) mall, it is the contradictory references to a public realm which create not structural instability, but potentialities for difference.

Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* is an attempt to construct a theory of space which unifies the physical, mental and social fields; "[in] other words, we are concerned with logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice." The triad of fields results in a conceptual triad composed of spatial practices, representations of space, and representational space--space as "perceived-conceived-lived." An overview of each concept provides a coherent framework within which to consider the complementary works of Michel Foucault and de Certeau.

First, then, is the concept of spatial practice, "which embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion." Fundamentally, this is the physical environment. Built forms and the landscape act as concretized spatial practices. To understand spatial practice, one must decipher the reified forms of routines, routes and networks. Mike Davis' examination of Los Angeles illustrates how discourses of safety give rise to architectural forms that merge urban design with surveillance and
control, marking the interrelations of spatial practice and representations of space.

Representations of space, the second concept, is “tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose;” this is “conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers.” For Weber, social order may be status order, the “stratification in terms of ‘honor’ and of styles of life peculiar to status groups.” Mental images of both status groups and space are tied up in bodies of knowledge which order space through the techniques of control. While these techniques may be represented in the built environment—Los Angeles, York University, the Berlin Wall—they are, more importantly, ways of architecture, informed by particular discourses. Relevant here is the work of Foucault, for whom space is inextricably tied up with questions of power.

In Discipline and Punish, Foucault examines the internalization of discipline and the production of docile bodies as it has been accomplished through architecture, discourse and social practice. The shift from a coercive, sovereign power to an internalized, disciplinary power in society has been facilitated by the emergence and proliferation of techniques of surveillance, and the social construction of normalcy. Working from Jeremy Bentham’s construct of the panopticon, Foucault identifies spatialization as a key principle of discipline, as it makes each body locatable. To return to Lefebvre, it is Foucault’s discourses of surveillance and control which are increasingly structuring the representations of space within contemporary society, as is
the case with Valentine's concept of public space as adult space. This is not to say that representations of space are solely prohibitive. A defined place is necessary for the definition or social settings and situations. Thus, perceived and conceived space make possible the practice of place, promoting and facilitating social interaction, albeit within a framework of constraints. Thus, the representations of the mall space invite and incite the desire to consume, to interact with the crowd, and to see and be seen.

Unlike representations of space, "the dominant space in any society (or mode of production)," representational space is the lived space, echoing de Certeau's notion of space as practiced place, and points to the possibilities for negotiation and resistance within hegemonic space. Representational space is that space "directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'... It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects." Through imagination, users can appropriate representations of space in a manner (sometimes clandestine) that potentially resists, subverts, reinterprets and transforms the institutional practices that construct the dominated spaces. These spaces are considered broadly as "a project embedded in a spatial context and a texture which call for 'representations' that will not vanish into the symbolic or imaginary realms."

How are representational spaces possible within the increasingly sophisticated techniques structuring representations of space? They are possible because representations of space--abstract space--contain contradictions; hegemony is never seamless. These are the birthplace of "differential space:" a space which explores the contradictions between what
is sanctioned and unsanctioned, possible and impossible. Differing from representations of space, "the only products of representational spaces are symbolic works." The means by which such spaces (representational, differential) are produced can be framed in differing ways. I begin with de Certeau.

Given de Certeau's distinction between space and place, we can begin to grasp the constitutive nature of the urban populace. A city devoid of inhabitants is not a city; it is a static agglomeration of objects without the subjects to bring it to life, complete its functions, reproduce its forms and explore its contradictions, thus producing new spaces. Such a city would be a representation of space without the subject to which it refers and represents itself. Returning to the city as an expression of discourses, de Certeau's concept of the pedestrian speech act provides a means of interrogating the numerous tactics by which people appropriate, or poach, from the dominant spaces organized through socio-cultural production, thereby producing symbolic spaces in which to add unsanctioned discourses. As with the concepts of Lefebvre, the ideas of de Certeau are informed and related to the work of other social theorists; considered here are Stuart Hall, Benjamin and Paul Virilio.

The concept of the pedestrian speech act attempts to capture the ways in which the movement of individuals gives shape to the city. "The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language" in that it involves an appropriation, an acting-out, and an implication of relations. This, and other contemporary theories, presents the city as analogous to a text, with the
inhabitant as the reader. As Susan Buck-Morss has noted, however, "[to] read reality like a text is to recognize their difference." Thus, the analogy, while fruitful, requires a cautionary note, such as the one provided by Lefebvre when answering the question “Does it make sense to speak of a ‘reading’ of space?”:

Yes and no. Yes, inasmuch as it is possible to envisage a ‘reader’ who deciphers or decodes and a ‘speaker’ who expresses himself by translating his progression into a discourse. But no, in that social space can in no way be compared to a blank page upon which a specific message has been inscribed (by whom?). Both natural and urban spaces are, if anything, ‘over-inscribed’... That space signifies is incontestable. But what it signifies is dos and don’ts—and this brings us back to power.

Thus, the focus on the ways in which individuals read and speak spatial forms must be informed by the realization that neither place nor space present singular readings. This might best be understood through Hall’s notions of encoding and decoding.

For Hall, reading and speaking are made possible and constrained by the rules of language. There is no guarantee that the encoded message—in a text, in a space—will be decoded as intended. In fact, there is a high probability of a lack of equivalence, resulting in distortions or misunderstandings. When the message, “via its decodings, issues into the structure of social practices,” there is the potential for differential readings—for Lefebvre, differential spaces. Hall outlines three hypothetical positions from which individuals decode: the dominant-hegemonic position, the negotiated position, and the oppositional position, thus highlighting the fact that decoding is necessarily neither a cooperative nor a resistive move. These multiple levels of reading—generally,
of practices--are returned to later in the Chapter under a consideration of resistance.

The second concept from de Certeau, that of tactics, helps to distinguish between the practices that produce representations of space, a hegemonic encoding of space, and those that produce representational space, which involves a decoding and a subsequent re-coding. Tactics, for de Certeau, are used by those who lack a space of their own, recalling that representational space is confined to the symbolic realm and thus never achieves the level of permanence of representations of space. Tactical practitioners are mobile and nomadic, temporarily infiltrating the space of the other and seizing opportunities to assert their transient, and potentially oppositional, production of spaces in a bottom-up use of power. The successful tactic is short-lived, thus eluding the dominant system's reaction to it, and, temporarily, making "places habitable." In this way, tactical practices can open up (differential) spaces within an order which "is everywhere punched and torn open by ellipses, drifts, and leaks of meaning: it is a sieve-order."

Tactics must rely on time as the practitioners lack a place of their own; place belongs to the other. Strategies, on the other hand, are used by those with a place of their own to impose systems of order through such techniques as outlined by Foucault and, more broadly, are the products of a special type of knowledge—that of how to provide oneself with a proper place. For the culture industry, in its attempts to monopolize and define social space, strategies are top-down implementations of power. Or, to attempt an integration of de Certeau, Lefebvre, and Hall: institutional encodings of space strategically
produce place; tactical decoding via practice transforms place into space, the representation of space into representational space. The notion of tactics speaks to the resilient character of human agency. The products of tactics rarely move beyond the transient and symbolic (and if they do, they are quickly met by the incorporating strategies of hegemony), but tactical practices continue, unabated.

The final concept, poaching, is an example of how tactical practices may be framed more specifically. Poaching is a constituent of productive consumption, characterized “not in its own products (where would it place them?) but in an art of using those imposed on it.” For de Certeau, the walker poaches from the city, appropriating forms rather than being appropriated by them. Similar characters are to be found in Benjamin’s figure of the flâneur, and in Virilio’s dromomaniac.

For Benjamin, the crowd is the hallmark of the urban experience. Leisurely strolling through the crowd, taking pleasure in wandering and the unexpected, chance encounters which ensue, the flâneur is at once a part of the crowd and disdainful of it. The crowd itself forms a mobile maze within the larger labyrinth of the city, and amidst it all, the flâneur is led by chance and whimsy, hoping to lose him or herself in the maze. Both the flâneur and the crowd which defines his/her existence emerged at a specific historical moment. Prior to the reorganization of Paris by Baron Haussmann (begun in 1859), wide streets were rare, making strolling an uncommon activity. The emergence of arcades at the end of the eighteenth century moved the public space of the street inside to private property, and was accompanied by the appearance of
the *flâneur*, the idle stroller. This interconnected history is detailed by Benjamin in the essay, “The *Flâneur*,” in which he examines the progression of the *flâneur* from a type of journalist to an exemplar of distracted leisure.\(^{54}\)

Amidst the crowds would stroll the *flâneur* as the writer of city sketches. These *physiologues* served a deeper purpose, apart from the entertainment of the writer. Packaged sketches of the new city life made what was strange seem safe and familiar to the bourgeois readers; more so, they assured the reader of the guarantee of classifying all that passed on the street. Thus one was not surrounded by an indecipherable and threatening mass, but by groups of characters, made tame and identifiable through the *physiologues*, but also distant. The *flâneur* (and his readers) may pass through the crowd, but remain detached as a categorizing eye is cast over the collection of bodies. While the *physiologues* faded from the journalistic scene, the *flâneur* as an urban type became more exaggerated; at one point in 1840, walking a turtle, at a turtle’s pace, was in vogue with *flâneurs*.\(^{55}\) The *flâneur* now, as then, is associated with laziness, idleness.

To return to the appropriation of cultural forms, the movement of the *flâneur* raises the distinction between concentrated and distracted apprehension. With the freedom to stroll leisurely, the *flâneur* has a marked similarity to the window shopper of today with the crucial difference that representations of space now anticipate and, in fact, facilitate rapid-fire distraction. Whereas the *flâneur* was a joke on the department store via disinterested apprehension, the tables appear to have turned and the shopping mall can be a joke on the shopper.
A more political consideration of the pedestrian as poacher and as transformative agent is found in Virilio's *Speed and Politics*. In it, he cites the control of speed as the last strategic element, given the collapse of time and space through technology. Accordingly, "speed is the essence of war," and "war consists in advancing your boundaries over the other's territory." Dromomaniacs, a psychological term given to compulsive walkers, become a revolutionary force for Virilio; dromology is movement as war, turning streets into political territory as presence establishes a position in the other's space. While the *flâneur* "goes botanizing on the asphalt," the dromomaniac's movement through the streets "is the best possible preparation for the battle for power."

Unlike these character-izations of everyday practices, the work of Paul Willis echoes that of de Certeau as a theoretical model. While not limited to the analysis of youth, it is within the area of youth culture that the notion of symbolic creativity has emerged and thus provides a point of entry into the rubric of youth in the relevant conceptual literature.

- *contemporary perspectives on youth*

Literature on youth, the meaning and social construction of adolescence, and the peculiarities of the adolescent social world abound; of particular salience for the thesis is the constructed relationship between adolescence and delinquency, and between youth and pleasure. In taking the production of space as a process that is both made possible and inhibited by structural determinants, a critical, rather than a perfunctory evaluation of the discourses surrounding teenagers is crucial to gaining an integrated understanding of how
teenagers produce a social space for themselves. Such representations of adolescence serve as a defining obstacle for the tactical practices of teenagers, and point to the fundamental ambivalence permeating their experience of space, and of themselves.

Willis develops a theory of how teenagers symbolically use the resources made available to them by the culture industry which resonates with the work of de Certeau. Framing adolescence as the stage at which individuals engage most self-consciously in the symbolic construction of identity, Willis highlights the fundamental character of symbolic creativity in the human enterprise. Symbolic creativity refers to the practice by which “young people use, humanize, decorate and invest with meanings their common and immediate life spaces and social practices.” Like poaching and, more generally, tactics, symbolic creativity rests in the uses to which individuals put cultural commodities, thus exploiting the discontinuity between intended and actual uses, readings and meanings. Thus, neither is consumption a passive process, nor are people dupes in their practices of consumption; rather, consumption and production engage in a dialectical relationship by which the specific practices of individuals are distributed on a continuum between passive and active positions.

Symbolic creativity is an integral and necessary component of everyday life because it answers the requirement of reciprocity in communication. Basic to the human enterprise is the need to make meaning through a dynamic Willis calls “grounded aesthetics.” Thus, symbolic creativity is not peculiar to youth; the social status of adolescence, however, provides particular obstacles
to the practice of symbolic creativity; "often the grounded aesthetics of the young are suppressed or even criminalized rather than developed."²

Teenagers are thus constructing an identity within a framework of imputed identity, constructed as both trouble and pleasure. With the decreasing role of creativity in paid work, leisure becomes the primary site of symbolic creativity. For youth, the site and practice of leisure is already constructed as (potentially) delinquent, adding to the layering of representations of space and making it that much more of a challenge to locate lacunae within which to insert symbolic transformations of the cultural commodity of place.

With respect to the construction of youth as trouble, Stanley Cohen identifies youth culture, particularly when associated with spectacular forms of delinquency, as a recurrent moral panic:

A condition, episode, person or group of persons...defined as a threat to societal values and interests... Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight."³

Generally associated with times of social change in which established values are perceived to be at risk, moral panics utilize folk devils as "visible reminders of what should not be."⁴ Thus moral panics are composed of adult responses to teenage activities--particularly group activities--as much or more so than they are composed of the activities themselves. What emerges is the recognition that moral panics may be created, not merely exaggerated and amplified, in order to serve non-moral interests.⁵ In the context of the thesis, the shifting character of public life may be approached as the cause of such
anxiety. More generally, however, is the issue of adolescent leisure, which represents an affront to the societal preoccupation with consumer culture which requires the adult realm to be highly focused on necessary work.

As was briefly touched on in the Introduction, the link between adolescence and delinquency is historically rooted. Tanner discusses how the industrial revolution's shift to a factory-based industry resulted in the stratification of society by age, effectively removing youth from the adult world of work. Displaced from employment, the young turned to theft as a means of subsistence; thus "juvenile delinquency was originally property crime committed on city streets by young working-class males directed against upper-class adults.\textsuperscript{66} No longer focused on a work world which required increasingly lengthy training, adolescence became an uncertain stage of transition characterized by leisure. While structured leisure is considered a positive force in shaping youth, unsupervised, unstructured leisure is framed as a source of corruption, increasing the opportunities to interact with and learn from other, delinquent youth. Thus youth are both troubled and troubling.

With the recognition of the discretionary income of youth came the invention of the "teenager" as a target for marketing in the 1950s. Here, youth at leisure is a source of pleasure; rather than youth-as-trouble, we find youth-as-fun.

The word "teenager" establishes a permanent wedge between childhood and adulthood. The wedge means money. The invention of the teenager is intimately bound up with the creation of the youth market. Eventually a new range of commodities and
commercial leisure facilities are provided to absorb the surplus cash which for the first time working-class youth is calculated to have at its disposal to spend on itself.67

The image of youth-as-fun is articulated at another level of marketing, at which the image of youth is offered to adults as a sign of vitality and fun, making youth in general an object of desire. This image of youth coexists with that of youth as troubled and troubling, creating a paradoxical experience of adolescence for the teenagers themselves. Portrayed as potentially delinquent and reproduced in the collective mind via moral panics, teenagers encounter images of themselves which contradict the marketing message that youth is fun and desirable, and is to be coveted and preserved. Marginalized in the adult world, adolescents cross a continuously shifting threshold, identifying themselves in ambivalent terms, reflecting their split social status.

Before attempting a synthesis of the two theoretical rubrics, which will serve as the point of departure for the remainder of the thesis, it is necessary to briefly consider theoretical boundaries and concerns.

• theoretical boundaries and concerns

One of the difficulties presented by the Cultural Studies approach is the setting of theoretical boundaries. Without clear disciplinary limits, there is the potential danger of becoming lost in the wealth of perspectives. With regards to youth culture, it is necessary, here, to comment on the concept of subcultures, the practice of resistance, and the role played by gender.

With respect to subcultures, adolescents in the mall may be characterized as a loosely-bound sub-set of a dominant culture, but less so of a
Parent (class) Culture, which, while focusing on "certain activities, values, certain uses of material artefacts, territorial space, etc.,"
 is not that significantly different from a wider culture in which adults use the mall as a site of interaction as well as transaction. While youth are faced with obstacles peculiar to their age group, their uses of the mall parallel, albeit in often exaggerated forms, the general population's uses of the mall. Because the focus of the thesis has not been on the tightly-bounded or the spectacular groups within the mall (as would have perhaps been the case with an explicit focus on mall rats or shoplifters), the use of subcultural theory to interrogate the general teenage activity of hanging out does not seem appropriate. There are, of course, lines of convergence for subcultural theory and this project, namely the attention given to the effect of the broader community's reactions to the presence of the youth. This focus has grown out of labeling theory, and will be of particular relevance in the Chapter 3.

Similarly problematic is the concept of resistance, to which subcultural theory has been particularly attentive, if not preoccupied with. The problem of framing an analysis in terms of resistance is that it tends to deteriorate into dichotomies and extremes: resistance vs. resignation, opposition vs. oppression, etc. What goes missing is the continuum along which individual everyday practices are situated; the resulting community of practices is never wholly resistive, but is a combination of practices which differ in their intensity and interest in the dominant order. Returning to Hall, we can delineate a number of potential positions from which to use cultural commodities: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated and oppositional. However, all three of the
positions still make reference to the dominant order. What, for example, of disinterest? A practice that is oblivious--intentionally or not--to the dominant field is not a response to it. Specifically regarding youth, resistance theory tends to concentrate on, and potentially valorize, the more spectacular "styles" and forms of deviance ( punks, mods, rockers, bikers...) and misses the 'common' forms of resistance which involve less of an oppositional culture and more of a culture of tactics. Thus, we should speak of resistance as a question of relativity, of intensity and intentionality.

Finally, work within youth culture and delinquency generally suffers from a common ailment: the misrepresentation of females as absent or marginal. The problem stems, in part, again from the preoccupation with serious delinquency and the lack of attention given to 'common' delinquency, which is still tied to leisure, but is less a response to frustrations, dissatisfaction, and so forth. While the thesis is not overtly constructed along gender lines, the differing nature of the obstacles and limits faced by adolescent males and females is instructive, particularly as they are influenced by paternalistic attitudes. Female teenagers are more likely to be subject to parental controls and demands of household assistance than males, resulting in stricter limits on where, when and with whom females may spend their leisure time. Thus females are less at risk, but also experience less freedom.  

• towards an integrated theoretical approach

It is necessary, before proceeding, to provide a synthesis of the foregoing perspectives so as to set the analytical framework within which the question may be asked, "Broadly, how do teenagers use the mall?" The answer to such
a question, as has been discussed above, requires that the intersection of
cultural forms and social practices be taken as the keystone, as it provides a
platform from which to address the dialectical relationship between individuals
and the settings of everyday life.

Returning to Lefebvre's triad of physical, mental and social space, we
must recognize that all three co-exist but are far from synonymous; while
there are instances of harmony and/or reconciliation, there are also
contradictions. It is in the lack of equivalence between spatial practices,
representations of space, and representational spaces that an ambivalent
tension arises, making available gaps to be exploited via tactical
practices/symbolic creativity. To interrogate the transition from place to
space is to make analytical distinctions between points on a continuum, in the
sense that the 'real' nature of tactics is constantly shifting, and is only arrested
in the moment of analysis.

The mall is the result of both spatial practices--the physical organization
of space vis-à-vis architectural products--and the methods of design and
control, particularly as they pertain to the construction of appropriate
behavior, which produce representations of space. Peculiar to youth is yet
another level of conceived space, that of public space as adult space, and the
ambivalent images of youth, which present the adolescent as both trouble and
fun. The transition to a lived space (representational space, or practiced place)
is accomplished through practices, which may be framed as both tactical and
symbolically creative. However, youth do not participate solely in the tactical
production of lived space through negotiated or oppositional decodings; youth
are also implicated in the production and reproduction of perceived and conceived space. Their very presence in the mall marks a degree of capitulation or acceptance to the representation of space as is. The transition from place to space is one rooted in practices. As such, it resides in process and never achieves permanent transformation.

The effect of individual and collective tactics, rather than their claim to resistance, then becomes the explicit focus of inquiry. These effects are mediated by spatial practices and dominant discourses, and are most tangible on the level of individual experience. As such, an appropriate methodology must emphasize the adolescents' understanding of and participation in the ongoing construction of meanings of the mall as they produce, on the symbolic level, a representational space.

- research design and methodology -

With respect to investigating the complex social processes whereby teenagers make sense and make use of the mall space, qualitative research is the most appropriate approach. The interrelations of architecture and action can only be grasped in socially-situated practices, and cannot be duplicated through experiment or grasped through quantitative analysis. This research deals with real, not ideal, practices. Studying the particular situations and practices makes it possible to address the theoretical models of the production of space, thereby contributing to a body of literature in which empirical-theoretical works are largely absent. As well, the research attempts to redress a gap in the substantive work done on teenagers and/or the mall, which has largely excluded the ways in which each informs the other.
The study is limited to the ‘common’ uses teenagers make of the mall; common in the sense of what is shared, but also what is general. Therefore, in the context of transgressive behavior, the focus is not on the spectacular forms—shoplifting, assault—but on the ‘common’ pursuits such as shopping and loitering. Teenagers are of particular interest as a population within the mall due to their ambivalent relationship with the setting. Lacking many viable alternatives for the necessary space for socialization, teenagers are, in a manner of speaking, forced into the mall through the construction of youth crime, and of public space as an adult realm. Once in the mall, they are often greeted by suspicion and derision on the part of the same bodies who have helped remove the other alternatives; at the same time, they encounter representations of their youth as an object of desire, embodied in commodities. This paradoxical relationship is compounded by the contradiction facing adolescents regarding their implication in the social construction of the mall, and of the images of youth. Representations of youths as delinquent, for example, do not appear from nowhere, but are in part produced and reproduced via actual teenage activities. Moreover, teenagers participate in the construction of representations of space; at the very least, a recognition of the methods of control, even to subvert those methods, reproduces them on some level. Their very presence in the mall, regardless of how transgressive, is always contributing to the maintenance of the mall. Thus, the thesis suggests neither that the mall is wholly hostile to adolescents, nor that it is wholly tolerant of adults. Rather, the thesis appreciates those obstacles specific to the population at hand.
As the thesis is concerned with activities, attitudes, constraining structures and overall processes, an ethnographic approach is most appropriate. Here, we may take ethnography as understanding the ways in which people accomplish everyday activities, and how those activities produce a coherent life-world.72

*sample*

The research was conducted in Hamilton, Ontario. Like many other cities, Hamilton has experienced an exodus of businesses and residents from the downtown core. As a response, the city is starting a rejuvenation project which aims to lure people back from the suburbs to shop and live downtown. Hamilton has a number of malls, three of which were predominant in the research. Referred to as Central Mall, East Mall and Mountain Mall, all three are within walking distance of high schools. Mountain Mall, the largest shopping center in Hamilton, was repeatedly identified as “the” mall by the teenagers, even when it was not the mall at which they spent most of their time.

In order to explore the mall as both place and space, two crucial populations in the mall were identified: the mall’s controlling bodies, who have a vested interest in its commercial success (generally, administration, merchants and security guards), and the teenagers, who put the mall into practice as a social space. An initial interview with the marketing director of Central Mall led to subsequent interviews with security officers and merchants. An administrative representative of Mountain Mall and a police officer whom Central Mall employs for Thursday and Friday nights, and
Saturday afternoons were also interviewed. The fact that all of the Central Mall interviews stemmed from the mall's official representative could be problematic as merchants with low involvement or high dissatisfaction with the mall are underrepresented. However, the coherence in the data suggests that real patterns of meaning have been identified. In total, 10 interviews were conducted with various members of the mall's 'official realm.'

The second population, and the one to which the study is specifically addressed, is composed of the teenagers. "Cold calls" were made to the two high schools closest to Central and East Malls, which led to invitations from a family studies teacher at each school to discuss the proposed research with their classes. The classroom discussions generated feedback regarding the research questions, providing invaluable preparation for the subsequent interviews. From each class, volunteers were requested to participate in interviews, resulting in a sample of 12 respondents from each school. In the interests of a comparison, 6 teenagers from west Hamilton were recruited through personal contacts. With no mall in walking distance, west Hamilton teenagers provided an insight into how the motivations, meanings and practices of teenagers in the mall can be found in other locales (all commercial). The self-selection of respondents raises a possible bias in the data, as was the case with the merchants et al. However, the data are both diverse and cohesive, indicative of a rich and representative picture.

Gaining entry was accomplished through the auspices of the schools for a number of reasons. Inasmuch as both schools are within walking distance of malls, they provided ready access to teens who were likely to be mall users. As
well, recruiting respondents within the mall had already been framed by a security officer as transgressive, which was compounded by the fact that the construction of ‘stranger danger’ in public places could make recruitment in the mall threatening in the eyes of the teens.

In total, 30 adolescents were interviewed. Of these, the majority were in grade 12 or O.A.C., making them between 17 and 18 years of age. The respondents included only 6 males, which poses a concern regarding the generalizability of the data. However, neither the interviews nor the subsequent analysis were geared to the influence of gender on the use of the mall. When an issue of gender difference arises in the data, it is discussed in the analysis, but generally the thesis focuses on everyday tactics of teenagers as a whole. Class was also not a focus for the interviews, although the majority of respondents are from working-class families. Of greater relevance is the question of disposable income as determined by the teenagers themselves. While some of the respondents receive money from their parents, most have part-time jobs which provide them with spending money. This appears to be consistent with the national teenage population. This is not to suggest that the teenagers interviewed had unlimited funds at their disposal. Many save a large portion of their paychecks for university and other future needs. However, access to the mall exists apart from the ability to purchase expensive commodities (but the meanings of the mall are certainly affected by the inability to make those types of purchases). All of the teenager respondents possessed sufficient means to use the mall, meaning that the cost of bus fare or a food court purchase were not prohibitive.
Rather than class, the focus is placed on status, a "new and modernizing term for rank." For Weber, the distinction between class and status groups rests on the difference between the means and style of consumption:

With some over-simplification, one might thus say that 'classes' are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods; whereas 'status groups' are stratified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by special 'styles of life'.

What is important is that, whereas rank was once associated with titles, status is now associated with symbols which may be acquired and displayed, inextricably tying status to consumption in the contemporary social world. Different means and modes of consumption and display--albeit, partly determined by class--result in the stratification within the teenage population itself.

Access to the mall require access to money, but more importantly, use of the mall requires the knowledge of how to negotiate the setting’s rules and structures. The accomplishment of a style of use in the mall also requires negotiation of the ambivalent status of youth, marketed as a fun stage of life and imputed as a delinquent group presence.

- methods

Data were collected primarily through interviews, and secondarily through participant observation. By combining methods of data collection, and utilizing a number of theoretical perspectives, the research method as a whole falls under the approach Norman Denzin calls "triangulation." As an integrated approach to methodology, triangulation can reduce the presence of researcher
bias and minimize the weakness of one approach by complementing it with the strengths of another.

In-depth interviews were conducted one-on-one and in small groups and generally lasted 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews were relatively unstructured to allow respondents latitude to explore meanings, suggest themes, and so forth, and to allow the researcher the freedom to explore emerging themes. Interviews were guided by broad questions to keep them ‘on track.’ Interviews were taped, and the resulting transcripts supplemented with notes taken during the interview on non-verbal gestures, ‘off the record’ remarks and general impressions. These have been included in the transcribed conversations. While many of the notes are subjective (e.g., “disinterested voice”), I hope they will provide the reader with an opportunity to judge intent and meaning--albeit within my selection of quotes--for him or herself. Also supplementing the interviews were data gathered through participant observation. Observing activities in situ proved to be extremely informative, both in aiding an understanding of the interview data, and in testing the responses of teenagers, security guards, etc. for agreement with actual practices. To this end, observations were made during different times of the day and week over the course of a year at the different malls.

As the reader will have noticed in the introductory Chapter, excerpts from the interviews are accompanied by the respondent's gender and age, as well as by a code number in parentheses (e.g. R.16). The code numbers refer to the position of the respondent in the chronological order of the interviews, and are included so that the reader has the ability to distinguish between respondents.
For these details, and the code numbers, refer to Appendix A. The quotations in the thesis were chosen because they identify recurrent themes which are common to the majority of respondents. In the case of the merchants et al, respondents are identified by gender and occupation.

The resulting data were analyzed using the constant comparative method suggested by Glaser and Strauss, but modified by Cultural Studies. In other words, field notes were examined via the broad categories suggested by the two-tiered theoretical question, namely strategies and tactics, or place and space. Within these broad categories, themes began to emerge, and fit together. This was done without further reference to theoretical perspectives. By continually reworking and refining the themes and the emergent sub-themes, the analysis produces a multi-layered understanding of the practices of teenagers in the mall.

• role of the researcher and ethical considerations

To call participant observation in a shopping mall “covert” seems an exaggeration, inasmuch as the site is permeated by scopophilia and exhibitionism. That said, participant observation was the only form of research for the study in which I was not overtly identified as a researcher.

Two ethical matters concern informed consent and confidentiality. All respondents were asked to sign a statement of informed consent, in addition to having their parents sign it if they were under the age of 18, and were provided with a copy of the statement for their own reference (see Appendix B). The first few minutes of each interview were devoted to a review of the rights of the respondent, particularly the rights of non-response and withdrawal, and the
right to confidentiality. With regards to these and other concerns, the thesis follows the guidelines set out by the McMaster University Committee on the Ethics of Research on Human Subjects, and has received approval from said Committee (see Appendix C).

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3 Jacobs, *The Mall*, v.
17 Prus, “Shopping with Companions,” 93-104.
24 Julian Tanner, Teenage Troubles: Youth and Deviance in Canada (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1996).
25 Tanner, Teenage Troubles, 7.
26 Reginald W. Bibby, and Donald C. Posterski, Teen Trends: A Nation in Motion (Toronto: Stoddart, 1992), 303-04.
28 de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, 117.
30 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 11-12.
32 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 33.
34 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 33, 38.
38 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 39.
39 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 39.
40 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 42.
41 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 52, 60.
42 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 42.
43 de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, 97-98.
45 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 142.
58 Willis, *Common Culture*, 18, 146, passim; see also Willis, *Profane Culture*.
59 Willis, *Common Culture*, 21, passim.
60 Willis, *Common Culture*, 146.
64 Tanner, *Teenage Troubles*, 20.
67 Mall rats are generally defined as those teenagers who spend large numbers of hours in the mall on a daily basis, and who are most often loitering, rather than shopping or working in the mall. This will be returned to in Chapter 5.
71 In 1992, 42% of all 15 to 19 year olds were employed, the 70% of which had part-time jobs; see Lindsay Colin, Mary Sue Devereaux, Michael Berbog, *Youth in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1994), 5.
72 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, revised ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 300.
As we have seen, the designers of malls and pseudo-public space attack the crowd by homogenizing it. They set up architectural and semiotic barriers to filter out 'undesirables'. They enclose the mass that remains, directing its circulation with behaviorist ferocity. It is lured by visual stimuli of all kinds, dulled by muzak, sometimes even scented by invisible aromatizers. This Skinnerian orchestration, if well conducted, produces a veritable commercial symphony of swarming, consuming monads moving from one cashpoint to another.

Mike Davis

Why do we keep coming back to the mall? Well, you're also treated like that at Tim Horton's. You're also treated like that everywhere. And your parents don't want all these kids in the house, so you have to go somewhere.

female, 18 (R.16)

An analysis of everyday life is ill-fated if it does not take into account the settings in which social activities take place. Like the actors, the sociologist must recognize not only the obstacles and constraints, but also the opportunities and resources presented by and through the built environment. While the mall-as-place is primarily constructed by bodies in power, teenagers are implicated in the (re)production of the physical and conceived space. Their very presence implicates adolescents in the maintenance of the mall as a commercial, privately controlled space; their recognition of techniques of control, even if in order to subvert them, contributes to the perpetuation of the mall as a representation of space. Thus, the mall and teenagers cooperate in
the reproduction of the boundaries that define the space and delimit the power of the authorities within. The mall, meanwhile, constructs teenagers both as suspects and as consumers, attracting them as a niche market and providing them with a safe place to gather, while treating them as causes for concern once in the mall. Thus, the relationship between the mall and teenagers is an ambivalent one, as is examined at the levels of physical and conceived space.

• physical space •

The physical space of the mall is designed and constructed, first and foremost, as a commercial space. Locations of stores, rest areas and advertising are all designed to facilitate and influence shopping patterns, attesting to the ways in which representations of space give rise to a way of spatial practice.

Malls follow a general formula which places “anchor stores”—national chains and department stores—at the ends and intersections of corridors, thus drawing customers through the mall past other, smaller stores. Food courts also serve as magnets; people who come to the mall only for the food court must first walk past numerous stores, encouraging window shopping. Besides their role in directing the flow of traffic, food courts act as rest areas, but with ever-present signs reminding patrons that the area is intended for those with food and/or drinks, and that their stay should be limited to 20 minutes (generally). Other rest areas include benches and decorative spots such as wishing ponds or planters. Like the food court, however, resting at such areas is intended to be limited and is never far-removed from the flow of customers. Advertising, along with the anchor stores, promotes movement within the mall.
Support columns in the mall advertise products and stores to be found within the mall as a constant reminder of what else there is to see and buy.

In the same way that store, bench and advertising placement promote movement, lighting and temperature help to create an atmosphere, marketed like the commodities within the stores. Apart from seasonal decorations and the outer garments of patrons, there is little in the mall to mark the passage of time.

In the winter, I can go weeks without going outside. I go through the house to the garage and I drive here, park underground and then come into the mall. Sometimes you have to force yourself outside. We never leave the building. There’s no reason to go outside. You laugh about it. I don’t even own a pair of winter boots.

female, merchant, coffee shop

With the time change, I come to work and leave when it’s dark. If it weren’t for those windows [in the food court], I wouldn’t believe there was a sun.

female, merchant, accessory store

I like the atmosphere. I don’t know. I come to the mall when I’m upset, when I want to get away. I just go to the mall. It’s like a totally different atmosphere. It’s nice. They have trees in the winter, you know what I mean? And flowers living somehow, and there’s never any clocks anywhere. Like if you look in [Mountain Mall], if you’ve ever noticed, there’s not one single clock in the entire mall. Yeah, so you never know what time it is. You never know...you’re not in a rush. You’re not, like, “Oh, it’s 5 o’clock. Gotta’ be there by 5:30.” You’re just in the mall and you’re relaxed and you can totally unwind. Well, I do personally, you know.

female, 18 (R.16)

Constant lighting and temperature control, in short, create a uniseasonal, perpetual daytime. The sharpest experience of the mall atmosphere occurs at
thresholds; re-entering the outside world, one returns to the vagaries of climate and time, a reminder in the bitterness of January or the humidity of July how pleasant the mall can be. Compounded by the conceptions of space, such an atmosphere is one in which “nothing unusual is happening.”

This is unusual in itself, as real life is unusual, characterized by disruption, surprise and a lack of control. The dilution and exclusion of individuals and actions that detract from the mall’s commercial agenda are the goals of the mall’s techniques of control.

- conceived space -

The strongest discourse, ostensibly, in the representation of space is the commercial agenda of the mall, which is imbued in every facet of the space. Those with a vested interest in the mall’s commercial success have a right (as the mall is private property) and, to a degree, an economic responsibility to control the mall through policies and practices aimed at enforcing the implicit imperative to purchase. Not only does this imperative inform the spatial practices giving rise to the physical setting, but it also frames those within the mall as (potential) customers. Indeed, the call to consume underlies the entire construction of the mall, situated within a consumer society in which “[work], leisure, nature, and culture...have finally become mixed, massaged, climate controlled, and domesticated into the simple activity of perpetual shopping.”

All aspects of the representations of the mall space hinge upon the logic of consumption, which creates and perpetuates a system of needs “as a force of consumption,” distinct from the potential for ever satisfying those needs.

The manufacture of desire is predicated on that desire being inexhaustible because it is insatiable, and is manifested in a diversity of objects. Thus, the mall must
incorporate the conceptions of desire in its representations of space. Drawing on a collective desire for public space, and promising satisfaction for the desire for social status (and youthful vitality), malls market desire by conveniently locating innumerable temporary fixes under a single roof, and by perpetuating the equation of identity with possessions. More than simply embodying consumer culture, malls reproduce it by inculcating in its patrons the first law of consumer society, the imperative to purchase; the notion that consumption is socially necessary labor.

The necessity of consumption structures the expectation of appropriate behavior: to buy is not enough, one must also not distract others from buying. Putting these conceptions into practice is accomplished through techniques of control: surveillance systems, visibility of security officers, perceptible demonstrations of consequences, and so forth. The mall, at this level, is a place, structured by strategies which address the dual issues of law and order. The former concerns the legal acquisition of commodities, thus supporting the mall as a commercial venture, while the latter requires that the mall be maintained as a controlled environment in which the primary goal is consumption.

The issues of law-required consumption--and order-required demeanor--give rise to a typology of use for the mall's controlling agents. Adherence to one of the two criteria is insufficient to qualify as a desirable patron unless accompanied by the other, producing four broad categories: the lawful-orderly, unlawful-orderly, lawful-disorderly, and unlawful-disorderly. The categories are not mutually exclusive, as individuals may engage in different activities.
over time, pointing to the fact that stratification of space, and the activities within it, is not hard and fast with respect to stratification of individuals. Rather, the categories serve as a fluid guide to the detection and subsequent control of undesirable individuals and actions. The successful enforcement of rules requires more than their construction on the part of the controlling bodies. Rules must be recognized and, at least partly, accepted by the mall patrons, thus implicating teenagers in the very process which works to categorize them and, potentially, exclude them.

The goal of the mall’s techniques of control is to limit the mall, as much as possible, to a site of lawful-orderly behavior. Lawful behavior within the mall refers to more than an exclusion of shoplifting; the overriding ‘law’ is the imperative to purchase (and the reproduction of consumer culture), making the demonstration of intent and/or means to purchase the baseline for lawful behavior, and a moral imperative. Neither distracting others from purchasing nor challenging the order of the mall, lawful-orderly individuals cooperate in the creation of a controlled atmosphere, and their reactions to disruptions may aid in maintaining the demand for order. Expected members of this category include adults who visibly demonstrate, through appearance and demeanor, the means to purchase. In other words, individuals must display the symbols of a consumer in order to achieve access to the mall.

Thus individuals who “window-shop” are viewed as potential customers and may thus be considered lawful even if no actual purchase ensues, particularly if non-purchasing is compensated by orderly behavior. This raises the difficult balance between demanding the observance of rules and
maintaining order; the former may be sacrificed to the latter partially, or entirely. Security guards have a measure of flexibility in the application of rules, and decisions to selectively enforce them appear to be informed to a large extent by the moral panic\textsuperscript{6} surrounding teenagers. For example, retirees who gather and chat in the food court for extended periods of time are often--but not always--tolerated because they are an orderly population.

I was kicked out of the mall when I was younger, like 13 or something. There was, like, 8 of us. We didn't buy anything and we were just sitting there. We weren't bugging no one, we were just sitting there doing nothing and they [security guards] kicked us all out. I guess they don't want us loitering. And the thing is, (hushed voice) more old people loiter than we do. Like, we buy more stuff than a lot of them. They come in with their crosswords and they just sit there and do them all day. They don't...I mean, they just sit there. I mean, we go to the mall to buy stuff, and we sit in the food court and we have to buy something to sit in the food court. It's not as much now [that I'm older], but still sometimes they will say, "Buy something." They won't actually kick you out, they'll just say, "Can you buy something?" If I was just sitting there with my mom, they won't say nothing.

female, 18 (R.22)

Female: Old people are allowed to do whatever they want.
Male: But with old people, me and my friends always complain. Like, you sit there, and you see them sitting there for hours and hours, with their newspaper and one small coffee. They can sit there all night long and no security guard will say a word to them. But if you see one teenager...because you're supposed to buy a drink, right? If you sit there with your small coffee, and you sit there for 20 minutes, and you don't know the security guards, the security guard will come up and, "Do you want to go for a walk?"

Female: It's true. Old people are pathetic. I go into work at the mall, and Saturday mornings, they'll be
there at 8 o’clock, and they’ll be there until noon. Sundays, they’re there at 10 until, like, 4. And they sit there all day. Some of them are mall walkers, when the mall’s not open, and that’s fine. But the rest just sit there.

Male: Teenagers are troublemakers. Old people don’t cause trouble. That’s the way they believe it.

female, 18 (R.27); male 18 (R.28)

Teenagers thus demonstrate an awareness of their stereotype as a disorderly population, and of the implications of this stereotype, namely an age-based double standard. What emerges, as well, is the role of groups in the application of the stereotype; it is groups of teenagers which are regarded as disorderly and are subjected to exclusion more so than lone adolescents. In this way, teenagers recognize and identify themselves as troubling to others.

A discussion of the age-based double standard in the mall is not intended as a demand to lower tolerance for the elderly, but as a demonstration of the lack of tolerance for the young. Loitering fulfills the same social need for the elderly as it does for the young; however, the notion of tolerable deviation from the mall’s rules is significantly affected by the age of the individual in question, even within the teenage population. Older teenagers (generally, those over 16) are more tolerated than, and less tolerant of, younger teenagers, perhaps because the propensity for hanging out in groups dissipates as teenagers grow older. Double standards within the mall create gaps which may be exploited, even if by demanding a stricter observance of rules. Teenagers may attempt to force the mall’s hand, by demanding that the elderly be treated in the same manner, knowing that such treatment would harm the mall’s public image, and
thus its financial success. Such a tactic represents how resistance may be sought through an exaggeration of the dominant order.

The second category, *unlawful-orderly*, involves explicitly unlawful behavior, particularly shoplifting, which is accomplished covertly by the appearance of orderliness. Unlike teenagers, who are already objects of suspicion, the individuals of this type are not immediately suspected as they mimic the appearance of the lawful-orderly. These include professional (adult) shoplifters, fraud artists, and so on, whose innocuous appearance camouflages their activities (or, in the case of employees, the status of ‘member’ may act as a foil to detection). Security guards rely on information from the police and other malls in order to identify such persons *before* a crime is committed. If caught in a criminal act, a Polaroid is taken of the individual and posted in the security office so as to personalize—render visible—the criminal in order to avoid future crimes. This process occurs with all individuals barred from the mall.

Teenagers, regardless of their individual demeanor and activities, tend to be categorized as a group into the last two categories: *lawful-disorderly* and *unlawful-disorderly*. As discussed above, this applies first and foremost to groups of teenagers whose presence is expected to be disorderly. This expectation is reaffirmed when, by virtue of their numbers, groups of teenagers amplify their own noise, in turn amplifying the concerns surrounding youth. While shoplifting is explicitly costly for merchants, disorderly behavior has implicit costs. Distracting other patrons through loudness, erratic actions, shocking appearance or their very presence, the spectacular offenses and
demeanor of a minority of teenagers are generalized to the population as a whole, resulting in a broad typification as being a cause for concern.

It’s mostly youth who shoplift in the store, but they sometimes get a bum rap. It’s not always youth, there are also professionals. But when a kid comes in, you have to ask, “Is he a customer or a shoplifter?” What do I do? I service them to hell! (laughing) If you service him, ask him what he’s looking for, tell him all the other options, ask if he’d like to see another one...if you service him, he’ll walk if he’s a thief. You have to make good eye contact and let them know you know what’s going on.

male, merchant, office supply store

My merchandise has a lot to do with the problem of shoplifting. Kids want it, it’s expensive. There’s a lot of peer pressure to wear the right thing.

male, merchant, athletic store

If 3 or 4 teenagers come in...it’s a stereotype, but I’ll go up and talk to them so that they know that someone’s watching. If I keep talking to them, then they’re less likely to steal something.

female, merchant, accessory store

In the case of disorderly individuals, the security system relies on cues such as loudness, odd appearance, and so on. Unlike other undesirables--homeless, de-institutionalized psychiatric patients--youth are likely to be tolerated in the mall because of their role as a market. Once in the mall, however, the display of the signs of the desirable patron are insufficient for adolescents as the appearance of youth itself supersedes clothing and demeanor. This results in a marked disadvantage for teenage shoplifters, but also places all teenagers at an immediate level of suspicion, which may be unwarranted and unjust.
Youth are painfully aware of these stereotypes via personal experience, even though the vast majority described themselves as well-behaved. This experience is certainly not confined to the mall.

Male 1: Just walking down the street. If you're walking down the street, and they [police] see three people walking down the street, they'll say that's a gang.
JBS: What do they do?
Male 1: Pull you over, search you. It's happened lots of times.
Male 2: Just look at ya! *(laughing)*
Female: If he went like that on the street, in baggy pants and all that [referring to how Male 1 is currently dressed], yeah, he'd get pulled over, with a couple more of his friends.
JBS: What do the police say to you?
Male 2: "Spread 'em!"*(laughing)*
Male 1: They'll ask your name and age. And you say, "Joe Cool," or whatever. And they check everything. They give you a hard time. And you're just minding your own business.

male 1, 17 (R.11); male 2, 17 (R.10);
female, 17 (R.12)

You know, that stereotype that people have of kids. Oh, it's just that big ageism deal. Like, you walk into a place, and they stick you at the end of the line, they take people ahead of you, you know. It's a hassle. Like, I guess I notice it a bit more just being female, a minority and young. Like, it's pretty screwed *(laughs)*. It depends on what we're wearing. A lot of it has to do with what we're wearing. Like, I blend in with the adults, I guess. But as soon as you stick a kid in jeans, their whole manner changes. Like, I know I walk taller when I'm wearing nicer clothes. If I'm dressed up, I walk taller, and I put on a different air. In jeans, it's more of a relaxed state. And relaxed means we're going to use our language, we're going to, you know, do our things the way we do them. And as soon as we start doing that, you know, there's a gap between adult and teenager, and they don't understand us and we don't understand them. Suspicion arises.

female, 18 (R.15)
Male: [on going into stores] I feel like I need to tape money to my forehead.
Female: Yeah. I think adults underestimate the intelligence of teenagers. They think we're stupid or something. Like we don't have common sense.

Male, 18 (R.28); female, 18 (R.27)

Male: Because if you're a kid, they don't treat you the same. Like, I went into an electronic store, because I wanted to buy a stereo and check out the prices and stuff. And they're like, they'd come up to you and say, “Can I help you?” And I said, “No, I'm just looking.” And then they watch you like a hawk. I hate when store keepers do that, but I guess they have to. Because there are a lot of kids out there who will steal.

Male, 18 (R.18)

Of interest here, in addition to the stereotype, are the coping mechanisms adolescents use to deal with the effects of that stereotype on their personal identity. While some treat the stereotype indifferently—it’s just a part of life—and others joke about it (possibly minimizing it in their own minds), others rationalize and participate in the stereotyping of teenagers in order to distance and distinguish themselves from it. However, in doing so, they simultaneously identify themselves with the group stereotype from which they attempt to distance themselves, referring to “we” at the same time as rejecting their place in that “we.” Concerns over being typecast may influence the willingness to publicly socialize in groups, as examined in Chapter 5.

As discussed previously, there is a presupposition that teenagers will cause disturbances and distract other mall visitors. Works within the field of the sociology of deviance, which have focused on the groups constructing the
definitions of deviance rather than on the labeled group of individuals or
activities, demonstrate how definitions which tend to reflect the interests of
those in positions of power are construed as representing the interests of the
greater whole. In other words, the framing of teenagers as suspicious is
justified by protecting the other (adult) patrons, and/or teenagers from
themselves. This suggests that the conceptions of teenagers reflect not only
actual occurrences of delinquent or disruptive behavior, but also, and arguably
more importantly, reflect the non-moral--commercial--interests of the mall’s
controlling bodies.

The construction and maintenance of the mall’s law and order ironically
require the involvement of the deviant population. Laws are meaningful only
when they are accepted by the dominated population at some level.

It’s totally understandable. They are there to make a business. If everyone came and didn't do anything, just hang out... Like, it's totally understandable. Like, I don't question it if a security guard comes and yells at us for nobody having anything. Not only is it part of their job, but that's just how it is.

female, 18 (R.17)

Malls use teenagers as consumers, but not in an unproblematic way. Malls also use teenagers and other transgressors as examples to delineate and maintain boundaries, both physical—excluding barred and undesirable individuals—and moral—excluding shoplifting, loitering. Thus, teens are involved, unwittingly, unwillingly and sometimes actively and consciously, in the construction of control in the mall. To make an example of one is to reinforce the mall’s control for all. The spectacle of an individual being caught shoplifting, or asked to leave the food court, reassures patrons of the
commitment of the mall to providing a safe, controlled environment, while deterring would-be delinquents from breaking the rules—or so the mall would hope. That teens recognize the rules affirms that the threat of consequence is real enough; that they continue to test the limits of tolerable delinquency asserts that the mall is not perfectly controlled.

Security guards at [East Mall] are very dominant. You always know where they are all the time. And they don't care, they come up to you and they're, like, "Did you buy something?" And we're like, "Yeah, but we, uh, ate it already." So they're like, "Well, then you have to buy something else." Like, they're really big on loitering. You'd have to buy something, and then fill it up with water. And then run back with the cup. There'd be, like, 25 of us (laughing) and one little cup of, like, coffee. Then you'd go to the bathroom and fill it up.

female, 18 (R.16)

Yeah, I don't know why I did it, but we would just sit, like I said, in the smoking area and do nothing. Actually, that's why you develop a friendship with the security guards. They won't kick you out afterwards. Then they're just, like, "Yeah, whatever," and they have a lot more important things to worry about.

female, 18 (R.17)

Tactics and ruses such as befriending security guards, taking occasional walks through the mall in between stays in the food court, and using old coffee cups to pretend that a purchase had been made were commonly cited by respondents. Thus, recognition is not synonymous with observance of the expectations and imperatives of the mall. It does, however, contribute to the representation of mall space; teenagers, even in circumnavigating the rules, are awarding them the status of real—real in the sense of consequences. There
is always a limit to the extent to which teens can challenge and test the mall's lenience. The limits to tolerable risk are constructed, in part, by the aforementioned poverty of alternatives and the concomitant adolescent focus on the mall. Even if adolescents view the security officers as "wanna-be cops," they still must contend with the fact that the guards have the ability to bar them from the mall, effectively removing them from one of their social worlds. A security officer perhaps said it best: "For the teenagers, this is their playground. This is where their friends are. If they can't see their friends, they're going to smarten up."

To summarize, the successful construction of the mall as a representation of space requires the application of certain techniques of control, on both the levels of the physical--circulation of bodies and commodities--and mental--regulation of means of circulation. But this requires that teenagers themselves participate in the maintenance of the rules of the mall, opening up opportunities for them to negotiate, transform and subvert the strategies of the mall-as-place. As well, the mall requires the participation of teenagers in the circulation of the setting and its commodities, introducing the notion of the crowd as a necessary element for the existence of the mall. The practices which exploit these opportunities, thus creating representational space(s), are the focus of the following Chapters, which explore the varied practices of movement in the mall.

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1 Davis, *City of Quartz*, 257.
4 Baudrillard, “Consumer Society,” 42; see also Williams, Keywords, 78-9.
6 Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics.
Caveat Emptor: The Potentials and Pitfalls of Shopping

'Society' as an element in the history of shopping emphasises that the idea of 'a public space' is as important to actual markets as the buying and selling per se.
Don Slater

Consumer society is also the society for the apprenticeship of consumption, for the social indoctrination of consumption. In other words, this is a new and specific mode of socialization.
Jean Baudrillard

To take the mall literally is to take it as a center for shopping. However, to reduce shopping to purchasing is to miss the crucial role that crowds play in an era of mass production and mass marketing. Crowds do not gather because of similarities in class, age and gender but because of "the accident of their private interests." The market has historically been associated with the crowd as it has also been with a site of leisure. To maintain--indeed, to market--the entertaining and pleasurable presence of crowds, malls must make concessions and invitations to heterogeneous people and practices in the setting. The official agenda of the mall is hidden by the evocation of public space; however, the agenda becomes apparent when it is challenged, constraining the freedom of the crowd.

The crowd, despite strategic filters, is never fully reduced to a mass of homogeneous automatons, obeying the mall's commercial logic. The convenience of everything-under-one-roof is insufficient to attract shoppers;
malls must create an atmosphere which allows some freedom for the crowd to pursue shopping, but also to socialize as a common interest. Teens, with few tenable alternatives, are one population in the mall for which socializing greatly affects, if not supersedes, the cause of shopping. Social shopping is a common activity for teenagers in the mall, involving them in the reproduction of the mall's commercially driven representation of space. This does not mean, however, that adolescent shoppers are necessarily proactive in this reproduction. Indeed, they may simply be indifferent to it, using shopping as a means rather than an end. But appropriating the mall by creating their own meanings of shopping does not inoculate adolescents from being appropriated by the mall. They are still consumers and their participation in the broader consumer culture raises the problem of malls as sites of socialization. This Chapter explores shopping as a potential source of pleasure--as leisure rather than necessary work--and as a means of indoctrination.

- **shopping as necessary or unpleasant** -

Shopping, as a pleasurable activity, is contingent upon a number of factors, including individual perceptions of shopping and the particular instance in question. Juxtaposition better illuminates the social meanings associated with shopping; therefore, we begin with shopping as a necessary or unpleasant activity.

Necessary shopping is prompted and limited by a pressing, specific need, generally for “essentials,” such as toiletries, groceries, etc. It tends to be accomplished alone, adding to its unpleasant nature for many of the respondents.
Shopping by yourself is boring, yeah, because there's no one to talk to. I only go shopping by myself if it's absolutely necessary. Like, no one else will go with me, and I have to go. Like, if it's for 'me' things, like...except for clothes, but, like contact [lens] stuff which I always have to go and buy. Or if you have to buy film or something stupid like that, then I go by myself because there's just no point in taking anybody else.

female, 18 (R.25)

This is the type of shopping which can be defined as household work. But what emerges from the data is that this is not the only form of shopping. The presence of friends and the goal of the shopping trip greatly alter the perception and definition of shopping.

Shopping with others, however, is far from a guarantee that shopping will be viewed positively. Individuals may view shopping as unpleasant because of a lack of personal interest in the activity, or a lack of funds to accomplish it. As well, individuals may frame shopping as an anti-social activity, depending on the particular shopping trip and the interests of their companions. A lack of interest in shopping—in general, or in specific instances—does not preclude teenagers from going to the mall because shopping does not exhaust the possible pursuits in the mall. It does, however, highlight the ambivalence of the space, which provides constant reminders of what the individual may not want to, or cannot, have.

I've adapted a new lifestyle now that I don't have any money. I think people can take advantage of the mall as a place to go without money. If I'm waiting for my friend to finish work, I'll kill time by myself, like, in the library [in Central Mall], or I'll walk around with puppy dog eyes, wishing I had the money to buy things. I mean, there's no enjoyment
in it. It's self-torture. It's totally depressing to window shop.

female, 18 (R.17)

Is shopping a girl thing? Yeah. Like, my boyfriend doesn't like to shop at all. Like, I don't like it, but I like shopping more than he does, and I don't really like it. I like it if I have money. But if I don't... I think if it was equal guy shopping and girl shopping [meaning being in the mall], the girls would shop and the guys would sit in the food court. And sit there. My best friend just hates malls. She's like a guy. She'll go in, get everything, and it doesn't matter where, and she'll leave. My boyfriend's like that too.

female, 18 (R.25)

Never have I known guys to shop, like, I've never shopped together for... It's just weird. Like, if we're together [in the mall], it's usually on the way to somewhere else. And we have to drop in and pick up something. That's all it basically is. Like, I went shopping, I wanted to buy a pair of jeans, right? And S. [male] and C. [female] came with me, OK? Now, if C. was just there, that would be OK. But S. was there, so I was like... They took off on their own, and I was like, "OK, go ahead. I've got to buy jeans. Go. Go find your own little thing to do." Because S. was there. Isn't that weird? Because S. would be bored. And the same with C. I don't usually go clothes shopping with her either. Because with jeans, you've got to try on, before you buy them, right? I hate doing that with someone waiting for me, because they're like, "Rush, rush, rush." If it had been a CD, then I wouldn't care if S. was there. Because it would've interested him too.

male, 18 (R.18)

Central to these reflections are the two factors of access and gender in defining the meaning of shopping. Neither factor, however, is completely determining. An individual with a lack of funds may or may not enjoy shopping; an individual with money is not necessarily an avid shopper. Similarly, the gendered stereotype of shopping as a female pursuit erodes in the face of individual
practices; goal-oriented shopping is not the sole domain of men just as extended, social shopping is not limited to women.

The scope of the research has not been sufficiently broad to allow for a fully-informed analysis of the role gender plays with respect to shopping practices. While data suggest that shopping practices are affected by gender, they also suggest that there is no hard and fast line to be drawn between male and female shoppers. The gendered stereotypes of shopping may affect, but may not necessarily be reproduced in, actual practices. As shopping is stereotypically considered a female activity, it may be that males lack the opportunities to participate because of peer expectations. There are, however, products which males clearly enjoy shopping for, including CDs and electronic goods, which reflect a gender-ization of products themselves, and not just shopping. These products may also be more accessible for group perusal and more broadly interesting to all involved, regardless of gender. The presence of companions, whether of same sex or different sex, makes shopping more overtly social; if this is not an accepted social activity, either by virtue of gender, or one’s specific companions, then shopping may be seen as an inappropriate or unpleasant social activity.

*shopping as social*

Functional shopping (in-and-out) certainly falls within the lawful-orderly category of activities, but is not the preferred shopping practice in the eyes of the mall’s controlling agents. Malls are structured to encourage extended stays because this increases the chances of additional purchases. Social shopping tends to prolong shopping time, as more than one agenda is being addressed.
While this is predominantly shopping-as-group-activity, the social milieu of the mall can make shopping alone a social activity as well.

Even going by yourself is social. It's just not...it's like social with yourself. Like, you kind of, you're kind of socializing with yourself because you're like, doing what you want and getting what you want. So it is social, in a way. And it's separate. Like, the fact that you talk to people that work there, but you don't really talk to anyone in the mall, but you talk to people that work there. Sometimes you see friends there, and you talk. So it is social.

female, 18 (R.22)

Malls are very aware of the need to provide a social atmosphere to attract customers, and merchants help to construct this atmosphere by providing a personal selling approach. While this may be motivated by sincere personal interest in the individual customer, it is also a strategy to develop customer loyalty.

We have a lot of repeat customers, which is very important in retailing. It's not really a community with everyone on a first name basis, but retailing has quite a different relationship with the customers than in banking, for example. We get life stories from people, which is great. There are a lot of people, especially elderly, who are lonely and want to talk.

female, merchant, accessory store

I know customers. It's not in my business to walk up to them and say, "What do you need? How much money have you got?" You have to take your time. You build a relationship with your customer. It's not a personal relationship, although that's an aspect of it. It's a business relationship.

male, merchant, athletics store

The personal investment in these merchant-customer relations is minimal, but still transforms the anonymity of the mall crowd to a social setting. Here we
see the stratification within the relationships between customers and the mall's agents of control. Merchant-customer relationships are more loosely structured by the rules of the mall, unlike the relationship between customers and security guards. Apart from these two types of connections, the most rewarding social interaction is found with peers, with whom shopping becomes much more of a medium through which to interact.

If I'm alone, I'll go in there, I'll get my thing, and leave. But if I'm with someone else, like C. [female], she'll go into a... It's all her fault (laughing). She'll go into a movie store, so I go in with her, and I start looking around. And I thought, "Oh, that's a cool movie. I might buy that." Or a CD. I'll look at prices. And then, you know, you're looking for prices then, now it's mine. I'm going around to stores myself then, looking at prices. But usually, when I'm by myself, if I know it's in [East Mall], I'll go there. If I know it's somewhere then I'll go there, right? And I'll go right in there, I'll get what I want, and leave. That's what I do. I don't look around, I don't do nothing. It's in and out. But if I'm with somebody else and they're looking, usually...yeah, always. They're always looking for something themselves, so you go with them and see something. "Oh, that's cool." Then I might buy something.

male, 18 (R.18)

It's different shopping with friends. I think it's more social. You take your time and you're not really going for just one purpose, just to, you know, shop, get that and leave. You're there, and you can spend as much time there as you want.

female, 18 (R.24)

Female: I'm like the biggest shop-aholic in the world, OK? (laughs) We usually come, and do the round: Bootlegger, Smart Set, Le Chateau. And usually we go to Eaton's because Eaton's is everybody's favorite store. We'll look at cologne, perfume, and all that stuff. Then we go out to wherever we're going to go. You can ask anybody. You can ask that guy I
came with, “What’s the route that S. [respondent] does?”, and he’ll say, “Oh, Bootlegger, Smart Set, Le Chateau, Eaton’s.” And that’s the week. Then I bring my mom on Saturday and buy everything I saw during the week.

JBS: How often do you buy something during the week?
Female: How often? Have I ever gone to the mall and not bought something? No (laughs).

female, 18 (R.16)

The practice of shopping with a parent, particularly the mother, is raised here, but is developed in the following Chapter with respect to shopping as a *rite de passage*, and to the shifting tolerance of parents in the mall.

Whereas necessary shopping is strictly goal-oriented and generally described as brief, social shopping requires the expenditure of greater amounts of time. It may also require greater amounts of money if the presence of others facilitates purchasing for the individual via supportive opinions of shopping in general, and of the product in particular. This does not mean that shopping with friends necessarily leads to a purchase; in fact, a friend’s opinion may dissuade the buyer, or may be ignored altogether.

Yeah, you look at stuff. That you can do with friends. But if you’re actually buying stuff then it’s... Then they’ll say, “Well, I don’t like that,“ and you’re like, “Alright,” and you put it back (*displeased expression*).

female, 18 (R.22)

Maybe twice I’ve gone shopping with boyfriends. But, you know, they’re not patient enough. They’re like, “Oh, that’s nice,” but you know they’re just saying that because they want to leave.

female, 18 (R.24)

Girls will never take guys’ opinions. They’ll ask for it, but they’ll never take it. I swear to God! (laughs)
Unless it’s a CD. I went shopping with her [a female friend], and she’s like, “I want your opinion on something.” And she’ll hold it up and I’ll say, “Well, it doesn’t look that great.” And she’ll go, “Well, fine then!” But if a girl had told her that, I don’t think she would have bought it. Because it was a girl. I don’t know why they bother asking for our opinions. So I just say, “Yeah, that’s nice,” unless it’s really bad, like plastic pants or something. Then I’ll say, “No, sorry, it doesn’t suit you.”

male, 18 (R.18)

Yeah, I don’t like shopping by myself. It’s boring. Yeah. I like people’s opinions, but I never listen to them (laughs). My boyfriend, he hates shopping with me. He’ll say (disinterested voice), “OK, that looks nice. That looks nice. They all look the same.” He can’t tell the difference.

female, 18 (R.25)

These observations point an obvious gender difference, pertaining to the general interest in shopping, and the specific interest in particular categories of commodities. Fashion is predominantly, though not exclusively, constructed as a female concern, placing men as often peripheral (if not distracting) shopping companions. Interesting as well is the suggestion of the different value placed on companions’ opinions, depending on gender. Women and men both display themselves in an attempt to attract the admiration and approval of others. In the case of young women, at least, the opinions of one’s girlfriends supersede those of the male friends. Impressing their girlfriends, arguably the most influential critics of their appearance, becomes the predominant goal of young women, who may ignore or dismiss the opinions of, say, boyfriends. Thus opinions may serve a number of functions, including those which do not influence shopping practices. As such, they are part of the ongoing conversations that make up shopping as a social pursuit.
It is not the intention of this thesis to paint malls as completely self-interested and exploitative, but to point out that whatever concessions are made for the public are always, on some level, commercially beneficial. Mall walkers, for example, cannot escape the inevitability of window-shopping, adding a capitalist motivation to the mall’s commitment to the community through such programs as mall walking. Similarly, malls target teenagers with age-specific clothing stores, music stores, and so forth, to attract a population with spending potential and a seeming propensity for group shopping, because of commercial interests, and not to achieve some humanitarian goal of providing teenagers with a social space of their own. If anything, malls contradict themselves when it comes to teenage shoppers. Lured as a niche market and represented in the commodities as desirable, teenagers answer the call of the mall only to be treated with suspicion, (particularly if they are in groups) by the same adults who covet youthfulness.

* redefining the objects of consumption *

To fully appreciate the draw of the mall, the idea of commodities must be taken broadly to include the crowd as well as the products within stores.

I don't think guys shop together. It's more just by themselves. Unless they're mall rats, you know. They shop together. They're just looking...well, looking for people.

female, 18 (R.24)

In effect, malls are much like television in that the audience is sold to advertisers. Before leasing space in the mall, merchants require some assurance of a market that suits their products. Thus, the teenage population, while subject to suspicion, is also a drawing factor for many merchants. This
introduces a schism between the individual as consumer and commodity, putting teenagers--among others--in the double position of spectator and spectacle, watcher and the watched, creating opportunities for pleasurable scopophilia, exhibitionism, visual cannibalism.

Well, usually you're walking around and you see [guys] and they either look at you, or you look at them. And, well, we have our big mouth friends and our quiet friends (*laughs*) and it's the loud ones who might start talking to them. You wait until he looks over and then you wave (*laughs*). And then, sometimes, they start following you.

female, 18 (R.22)

Yeah, sometimes C. [female friend] dresses for the mall. She'll wear, like if she's, um...(*laughing*) in the mood to take count of how many guys look at her or whatever, she will...she will wear, like, a tank top with a coat over top just like this (*indicating his coat, unzipped*). Which is what she was wearing yesterday. She just opened her jacket and let the wind blow (*laughing*) and we counted nine guys. It's part of the entertainment. Or if she sees some girl, she'll say, "Hey, there's one for you!"

male, 18 (R.18)

Outside of the explicit adult supervision of home, school and work, the mall becomes a space of relative freedom for teenagers in which they can explore emerging sexual identities. Mountain Mall has two floors, the second of which looks down on the first, providing a scenic (and strategic) view of the passing crowd. Teenagers can be found along the second floor railings, particularly during the peak teenage times, after school and Friday and Saturday evenings. Not all of them are scoping out potential partners; there is pleasure in simply watching the antics of one's peers, and of other mall patrons.

I know if I am in the mall, I very rarely sit in the food court for the purpose of eating. Like, I always go to
McDonald’s, and after I buy my food, I move to one of the benches in the middle of the mall and watch people walk by. I never sit...I don’t know... People stare at me. I stare at them. It’s mutual, but I think for them, it’s more, “Why’s she sitting on that bench?”

female, 18 (R.15)

Sometimes you get people doing stupid things and you can laugh at them. (laughing) One time, I was at [Central Mall] and this guy was, like, fighting with the garbage can. It was funny.

female, 18 (R.22)

Male: Me and my friends, we always sit right by Consumers.
Female: I can always look out and spot at least three of his friends.
Male: It’s a smoking area.
Female: And it gives you the best looks at the mall.
Male: Yeah, you can see everyone that’s coming toward you. Or coming in the mall.
Female: He likes to scope it out, see who he knows.
Male: Well, yeah, and everyone knows where I am, and I can see where everyone else is. That’s basically what it is. I can see who I want to talk to and who I’m going to go plan to sit with, or say hi to, or whatever.

male, 18 (R.28); female, 18 (R.27)

These assessments of the role of the crowd highlight the pleasure teenagers find in watching others. Finding a vantage point from which to survey the crowd may be motivated by social interest, but it may also be a tactical move as it allows the individual time to prepare as the other party--stranger, peer, security guard--approaches.

More than an entertaining backdrop left to visual (or aural) apprehension, the mall’s carnivalesque atmosphere may be incorporated into the social interaction of adolescents, serving as fodder for conversations.
Yeah, I used to people watch. Yeah, well I guess, if you're there a certain amount of time... You're watching everybody. You have to have something to do, you know? Three hours everyday! That's, like, a group thing. Making fun of people, you know? I know it's mean, but...we all do it. I don't know, if somebody's dressed weirdly or something, we'll be like, "Oh my God, look what she's wearing." Everybody turns around. "Oh my God!" You know, "I would never wear that," and strike up a conversation. I guess we don't do it...you don't pay attention to it as much anymore because that's not what you're there looking for. You're not looking for somebody (laughs).

[later in the interview]
Without a mall, we probably just would've gone to someone's house. That's about it. I guess it would change what we did. I don't know. Yeah, we wouldn't know as many people. Obviously, we couldn't talk about things that were happening in the mall. We'd probably just be talking about what happened at school or, you know, out on the street or something, or in the house. At the mall, you can talk about fights, or like other people you know at the mall and stuff. And gossiping about them.

female, 18 (R.24)

Oh yeah, we are just terrible for watching people. We're the type of people, we will just look at a person and we will infer everything. We'll make up a name for them, we'll discuss what kind of music they listen to, what kind of family they have, if they have kids or not. Like, where they would go, what bar they would go to. We're just terrible like that. We have nothing else to do so we just make it up. Like, OK, we have this thing... This big obsession with, like...how to put it mildly...with skids. But that's just... We always analyze them. If we see them, we'll just make up their whole life, make up a scenario. Or we always see them hitting their children, or just being really loud and abusive in public. That's basically all we pay attention to. Or if someone's making a loud noise, you know, or you just want to walk over and see what's going on. It's always funny seeing people, like youths, being busted for doing something stupid, and, like throwing stuff at store windows, and just being stupid. I don't
know. I get enjoyment out of that. I don't really have anything in, like, my real life that's so exciting, so I just like to watch other people. It's more exciting.

female, 18 (R.17)

Female 1: Sometimes, you don't like the way [other people in the mall] look.
Female 2: But, I don't know, you look for that.
Female 1: Yeah, you look at people you don't like.
(both laugh) You just talk about them. You talk about them for, like, 2 minutes and then it's like, “OK, next conversation!” Like, it doesn't even last that long.

female 1, 18 (R.20); female 2, 18 (R.21)

What emerges is the predominance of derogatory remarks directed at others, even in the cases of individuals who express concern over the propriety of making such remarks. This points to an intolerance for their own adolescence, which is presented to them in the contradiction between adult perceptions of youth as trouble and as fun. Also suggested by the data is the fundamental role of talking in the production of a social space. Delivering commentary on the crowd, (small) groups of teenagers engage in a repartee of put downs aimed at both strangers and known individuals in the mall. Talk of this nature may promote a bond of solidarity between the commentators. As well, it may produce a sense of private space in the mall; private conversations are disguised within the general noise and chatter of the food court and elsewhere, creating a sense of intimacy between the joint spectators.

The mall’s crowd provides a ready supply of people for watching, but it also provides adolescents with an audience for their own activities. The audience, however, is mixed, meaning that different individuals and situations provide different audience roles. Peer audiences function quite differently from
adult audiences; as the two cannot be separated within the mall, teenagers may weigh their activities in light of who is, potentially, watching. (This is developed in the following Chapter as a potential obstacle to socializing.)

In a setting in which teenagers are constructed as and represented in commodities, and are also required to be consumers, it is of little wonder that the mistaken equation of identity = possessions holds such sway. Adolescence is a stage of identity exploration and construction; in a way, teenagers are shopping for themselves.

• shopping for identity •

One of the major drawbacks of locating social space in a mall is that by virtue of its predominance in their lives, it becomes a site of socialization for many teens. Adolescence is the transition to adulthood, raising the concern that perhaps the mall is too successful as indoctrination into the culture of consumption.

JBS: Why do you enjoy shopping?
Female: I could buy this shirt and tomorrow I'll go to school wearing it and everybody'll be like, "Oh, I love that shirt." And I'll be like, "Yeah, I just bought it last night." Then I feel good, because they like the shirt that I bought. I'll go to Eaton's...I love Eaton's. It's my favorite store. And I'll go upstairs and they have all these ceramic angels and stuff. So I'll buy one and I'll put it in my room and then everyone will be like, "Oh, that looks really nice. I want to buy one too." So then, it's like self-gratification. I got this, and everybody'll like it. I know it's sort of selfish and conceited, but it's like, I like to buy things, to have that... You know, if you came to school in the same clothes you've been wearing since grade 9, then everyone will be like... (look of disapproval)
JBS: Are there other ways of getting that kind of response from people?
Female: Probably... Well, like buying other people things. I'm big for that too. I also buy everybody... Like, I'll see something and I'll be like, "Oh, V. [male friend] will like that," and I'll buy it. And you give it to them and they're like, "Oh, you're so nice!" I love that! (laughs)

girl, 18 (R.16)

While this view is an exaggerated version of the more common attitude towards shopping, it suggests that identity has become synonymous with status. Status conceptually provides “a model of society which is not only hierarchical and individually competitive but is essentially defined in terms of consumption and display.” One's identity, as displayed through the choice of symbols, is thus approved via the market's affirmation of commodity tastes. However, possession of status symbols (often synonymous with hugely successful name brands such as Nike) is not enough to guarantee the desired confirmation of the status of being “cool,” the teenage version of social honor. The approval of peers, voiced as compliments and most strongly experienced through others' imitations of the individual, ultimately confers status.

Thus, we find a stratification of status within youth, as different groups invest status in different symbols, establishing a competition between groups as to which set of symbols will be regarded overall as “the coolest.” For example, 'jocks' (athletic and often popular individuals) put down 'goths' (who generally wear black make-up and clothing), and vice-a-versa on the basis of differing status symbols (Nikes versus Doc Martens). Within each group, there is a similar competition to display status, which is mediated by the personal relationships between members. This is not to say that friendships
cannot exist across different status groups; but generally, one tends to look like one's friends.

There is an ironic twist on the part of the adult conceptions of teenagers with respect to the construction of identity through possessions. Wary of leisure as corruption of adolescents by adolescents, and dismissive of the importance youth place on material possessions, adults fail to question their own participation in corrupting youth via the ethic of consumption. Consumer culture is not the mother of all evils. However, there are serious problems in identity formation when it is tied to possession acquisition, when self-esteem and gratification become synonymous with the objects used to display personal taste. The mall is a site of accelerated circulation; there is always something new to see, to buy, to be. If teens spend their formative years within a shopping environment, it is to be expected that shopping and identity will be linked. That said, we must recall that identity is never wholly reduced to possessions, meaning that subjectivity does not ultimately surrender itself to objects. Through the tactical decoding and appropriation of cultural commodities, teenagers symbolically create identities, but do so within a consumer society that constrains identity formation through the valorization of the material construction of status.

There's an insatiable need to shop among girls my age. It's disgusting. For them, the mall scene is, like, “Let's go shop and look at guys.”

female, 18 (R.17)

It has to be that cool way of people going, (mocking macho voice) “Oh, I have to buy a hundred dollar pair of jeans. Oh I'm cool.” They're afraid people are going to... It's the same as when they're in a group.
They've got to act cool. To act cool, you've got to wear the cool clothes. I remember people bragging, “Oh, my shoes cost 140 dollars.” “Oh, mine were 120.” Right? And I remember A. [male friend] saying, “I think the cheapest pair of shoes on my hockey team is 120 dollars.” So I'm like, “OK, if they can afford to put you in hockey and buy you those shoes, go ahead.” You know? (laughing) I think, I think it's all that. They have to wear the clothes to fit in, to feel that way. Or to have people... I guess, look up to them, I guess, in a way.

male, 18 (R.18)

I guess you're shopping in excess if you're always looking for something to buy. But I think that counts as materialistic. But if you're shopping and you need something... I'm envious, too, you know, if somebody can afford to buy a new pair of jeans or, you know, a new outfit all the time. But, you know, it doesn't really bother me because I'm used to it now. Like, saving and not buying.

female, 18 (R.24)

Yeah, I have a friend who's a compulsive shopper. I like her very much, but she is very materialistic. I think every generation is materialistic. Same as, there's always going to be boring people like me. Like, who don't do the mall thing all the time. Like, she goes to the mall all the time with different people because she loves to shop because she has money to spend. Like, I like going to the mall if I have money to spend, but if I don't, I don't usually go. Like, she'll blow her whole paycheck in, like, half an hour. (laughs) I'm so jealous! Yeah.

female, 18 (R.25)

While the preceding opinions point to an awareness, even a critical one, of the pitfalls of consumer culture, they come from individuals who spend time in the mall, and thus reproduce the mall as an icon of consumer culture. Perhaps more telling are the references to jealousy. While all of the respondents had the means to access the mall, few identified themselves as “compulsive” shoppers.
This may be due to a lack of interest; it may also be a result of limited funds. If a lack of money precludes “compulsive” shopping, one must question the source of the derision foisted on peers who do shop regularly. Consumer culture is (part of) everyday life. Perhaps accepting it, and making meaning out of it, is the best road to creatively reinterpreting the material symbols of identity. Shopping need not be a case of being appropriated by the mall; it may be a practice by which teens appropriate the mall, and more broadly, consumer culture.

Female: I used to hate shopping, but in grade 12 I got stressed and I found shopping relieved it *(laughing).* Now, every time I’m upset or stressed, I go shopping, buy a couple of things and then... *(big smile; laughs).* Like, before I would shop, but without a lot of money, it was also depressing. But then I got my job, and I was upset one week. It was just a bad week. So I was like, “I’m going to the mall,” and I had money this time. So I went to the mall, and I walked, like, I went through the whole mall, I went through all the stores. And I wasn’t going to buy anything. I was like, “No, no, I’ll save my money.” *(laughing)* But then I went through the whole mall. And after I did the whole mall, from this end to this end, looked at all the stuff I wanted to look at, looked at prices, and as soon as I got to this end, I went back and bought all the stuff I wanted. *(laughing)* Then I felt great! *(laughs)*

JBS: What would you say to someone who thought that there’s something wrong with making yourself feel better that way?

Female: No, it isn’t wrong. ‘Cause, I mean, why not? Everybody has their own way of pampering themselves, whether it be take a bath, or buying stuff. So if someone wants to buy stuff to make themselves feel better, then what’s the difference from having a bath? Like, what’s the difference? It still makes you feel good.

female, 18 (R.22)
Perhaps rationalizing an already naturalized practice is participating in one's own imprisonment, or perhaps what we find is a re-coding of shopping (or feigned shopping) as the access to socializing. Teenagers make purchases in a variety of ways, for a variety of reasons. A coffee in the food court is recognized as a necessary purchase in order to avoid accusations of loitering. Here, teenagers know that they have to buy, but in doing so accomplish, for minimal cost, the means to a social space. This is a conscious recognition of rules in order to better subvert them (buying only the coffee, or sharing one with friends). When teenagers frame shopping as a desire to buy, different levels of understanding come into play. Embracing shopping as a source of pleasure may signal indifference, resignation, active support, or blind obeisance. There are creative uses of space present in personally-structured routes through the mall, and of time in the extension of shopping through comparison. The construction of shopping as a pleasurable, social activity may point to a tactical reinterpretation of the mall's message of consumption, situated in a broader societal spectacle which seeks to isolate each individual. However, the emphasis on spending money in order to socialize, and on the social value of material goods points to a serious hazard of using the mall as a social world. Buyer beware! Consuming (at) the mall risks being consumed by it.

• shopping as leisure •

Last year, The New York Times ran an article on the popularity of malls, particularly outlet malls, as tourist attractions. In fact, some are so popular that they surpass traditional, historic tourist sites such as the Jefferson
Memorial and the Alamo in the number of foreign and American tourists per year: Franklin Mills, outside Philadelphia, drew four times the number of total visitors to the Liberty Bell in tourists alone. Perhaps more telling, even, is the fact that The Mall of America attracted 40 million visitors last year, 12 million of whom were tourists; that is more than the number of tourists who visited Walt Disney World, the Grand Canyon and Graceland combined.\(^7\) Despite the fact that The Mall of America offers much the same merchandise as can be found in most malls--albeit on a wider and grander scale--shopping done on vacation is symbolically different; in fact, shopping may be the goal of the vacation. No longer do you visit The Mall of America if you visit Minneapolis; now you might visit Minneapolis if you're in The Mall of America--that is, of course, if you can find the time.

As discussed above, shopping often figures in the activities pursued by teenagers in the mall. As a social activity, shopping serves as the means of interacting with friends, as an activity to do together, and as the means to inhabit the mall. That is, teenagers must demonstrate the intention, if not the ability, to purchase in order for them to occupy the mall, and such a demonstration may itself be a social activity.

Like, look at Midnight Madness. Everybody goes there. I went on Friday, and everybody was there. I think it's just something different, and they know everybody's going to be there. Social, yeah. I just had to pick something up, and everybody was there. By the time you went and talked to everybody, a half an hour went by and I was supposed to meet my friend. I was 45 minutes late. I got in trouble! (laughing)

female, 18 (R.24)
Even when social interests completely subvert commercial ones, social life within the mall is contingent upon purchasing power. This situation is not confined to the mall. Leisure and pleasure are increasingly constrained, stunted and controlled as they become associated with commercial sites. This interiorization marks the privatization of public life, and can be witnessed in shopping malls, pedestrian tunnels and skywalks, high-security suburbs and elsewhere. But has leisure changed significantly? One can argue that while the locus has shifted, the focus has remained the same: fun. However, when the locus of leisure is the mall, other activities, which cannot and do not go on with the mall, go missing.

Willis identified leisure as the site of adolescent symbolic creativity because of its relatively unstructured boundaries. If crime, moral panic⁸ and lack of access have pushed the leisure world of teenagers inside the mall, what of symbolic creativity? Teenagers are buying, and buying-in. But they are also, as the next Chapter examines, prying open cracks, redefining shopping and shopping malls--albeit on a highly personal and temporary level--to insert more transgressive practices, to inject disorder, to reject the vagaries of the real, of the public.

If, by its very nature, shopping is strategically constructed, can we even talk about tactical shopping practices? Willis and other subcultural theorists have focused on style as the tactical use of products, but what of the practice of shopping itself? The teenagers who specialize in comparison shopping have a special hold over time--de Certeau's locus of tactics--as they, exempt from work-a-day life, have the leisure time to spend shopping (and perhaps spend so
long shopping because they do not know what to do with their leisure hours). These teens are arguably the best informed shoppers in the mall, as their familiarity with the day-to-day or week-to-week changes in the stock and sales provides a tactical knowledge that potentially sees beyond advertising rhetoric and display. As well, it is an exceptionally current knowledge of the market(ing) of status symbols which emerge in new fashions and music, and in other trends. Perhaps these individuals should consider hiring themselves out--guerrilla shoppers, mercenary sale hounds--to those uninformed and rushed adults who may have little idea of what is on sale, and less so of where it is sold. Imagine the rush at Christmas time as parents participate in bidding wars, anxious to get the best tactician's help for those hard-to-buy-for teens.

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1 Don Slater, "Going Shopping," 194.
3 Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire, 62.
4 Frederick, As Time Goes By.
5 Williams, Keywords, 300.
8 Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics.
None the less, it is important not to overstress social control in leisure spaces. A second factor operating in such sites is what Bakhtin calls the carnivalesque, the inversion of social norms and codes within the spaces of everyday life.... While this may simply take the form of ironic remarks or parodic actions which only momentarily destabilize the authority of the social order at the micro-scale, in some cases the carnivalesque is marked by full-scale revolts, eruptions of violence and major transgressions of social norms. Leisure in this case overflows into serious carnival, loosing its relaxed, uncommitted mood in favor of more wholehearted and engaged festivity.

Rob Shields

It's a hang out, exactly. It's like a clubhouse type thing, when you used to be a little kid. It's a clubhouse.

male, 18 (R.28)

The mall is constructed as a site of circulation for products and bodies. Teenagers participate in the circulation of the mall as shoppers, even if particular practices of their leisure/social time interrupt the flow. Shopping is a recurrent focus as a group activity, and is often not oriented towards a purchase _per se_, but the pursuit serves as a vehicle for inhabiting the mall. Shopping trips may not result in a purchase (although they involve consumption of the images of products, or people), but are understood as productive activity. Even without a souvenir, the individual can recall a goal: “We were looking for CDs.” Hanging out, on the other hand, is more often associated with “doing nothing,” and understood as unproductive time. Here,
hanging out becomes a matter of wasting time, recalling the original connotation of consumption, that is, "to destroy, to use up, to waste, to exhaust." Ironically, these wasteful practices go furthest to producing a social space and effecting transformations to representational space. Space as de Certeau’s practiced place is most tangible when it exploits large inequalities and contradictions in the dialectic between lived and conceived spaces. In moments of representational space (and they are always moments, as the symbolic here never attains the obdurateness of the conceptions of space), the mall-as-place is made obvious. Motion grinds to a halt.

• the freedom to do nothing •

There are a number of factors contributing to the teenage presence in malls, not the least of which is the lack of other sites for socialization. There is also teenagers’ possession of considerable ‘free’ time, over which they exercise the most discretion regarding how they spend their time (compared to the control they have over time spent at a job, doing household chores, studying for school, and so on). Teenagers have, on average, more than 5 hours of free time per day, outside of school, work and household chores; in fact males between 15 and 17 have the most free time—7.1 hours a day—of anyone under 45, male or female. Adolescents are not totally ‘free,’ however, in their choice of the mall as a place to go. The mall itself targets teenagers with specific products and a social milieu intended to draw in group-shoppers. A final influence comes from parents of teenagers. Faced with an increasing demand for autonomy on the part of the teenager, parents may view the mall as a relatively “safe environment” for the first forays into freedom.
Often the mall was identified by respondents as one of the first places to which their parents would allow them to go unattended, outside their immediate neighborhood. Many mentioned that their parents perceived the mall as a safe place for children because the presence of security officers and merchants balances the absence of a supervising parent.

I don’t like going outside by myself downtown. But I feel safe in the mall. Because you know that you can always get help or whatever. Because there are people there.

female, 14 (R.26)

The more people there are, the less chances you have, or your kids to get hurt. Yeah, and it’s not just all young people. There’s mostly older people involved, and that’s supposed to make you feel better that there are adults there. But it’s not like they’re your parents. They can’t send you to your room, or can’t tell you to act, grow up quickly if you’re acting stupid.

female, 18 (R.25)

Female 1: I think it’s just ‘cause it’s an enclosed area [that parents allowed her to go to the mall alone as of age 10]. I mean, there are adults here, there’s security guards.
Female 2: You get the lecture never to leave the mall...
Female 1: Yeah, and don’t talk to strange people. Yeah, you get all that.

female 1, 18 (R.20); female 2, 18 (R.21)

Emerging from these comments is that the perception of safety in the mall is largely a function of the presence of the crowd, more so than a result of the presence of security guards. The belief in “safety in numbers” recurs later in the Chapter with regards to peer groups.

The mall does not enjoy a unanimous vote of confidence from parents. As a site of leisure, the mall becomes a possible site of corruption as its
heterogeneous crowd increases the possibility that teenagers will come into contact with delinquent individuals. There is the assumption underlying this moral objection to malls that teenagers are somehow prone to corruption; deviance is a natural part of adolescence and it is only through the intervention of adults that teenagers might be saved from themselves. One need only recall the responses of teenagers in previous Chapters to such a stereotype to realize that teenagers are far more conscious agents of their social lives than they are commonly given credit.

Most of the kids got away with [shoplifting]. I guess, you know, it was a problem, but not that they got caught or sent to jail. Just small things. They would brag [in the food court], “Oh look what I’ve got and I didn’t even pay for it.” I guess maybe that’s why my mother didn’t like me hanging out there every weekend, I guess. I guess because she thought maybe I’d see something that I wanted, and I couldn’t have it and I’d probably take it or something.

female, 18 (R.24)

Probably because of my mom [that he didn’t hang out at malls when younger]. She always told me when I was a kid never, like, “I don’t want you hanging around malls, causing trouble.” So I guess I followed that. Yeah, I guess I never did hang out at malls because my mom told me not to do that. She’s afraid I’m going to get in trouble and hang out with the wrong crowd and that. She’s more worried about thefts, right, because if you’re hanging out with a group of people and one person steals, you’re an accessory if you’re with them. The worst thing that’s going to happen at the park is knocking over a garbage can. But (laughing), I was so proud when I was 13 or 14. I said, “OK, I’m going to the mall.” I used to take my bike everywhere without my mom knowing, and then about a week after, I’d tell her, “I’ve been doing this for a week,” and she’d be like, “Oh, OK.” But I was so proud the first time I went
to the mall and bought a CD on my own. So I guess
going to the mall by myself was a big thing.

male, 18 (R.18)

The mall, then, becomes a symbol of burgeoning independence, often initiated as a resistance to parental control and limits. Respondents repeatedly asserted that their own parents’ concerns were misguided with respect to their own maturity and responsibility, but were accurate in terms of the threats posed by other teenagers.

The adult perceptions of the safety of the mall are often contradictory. While malls may be a safe haven from the more overtly hostile, outside world, they are also forces of moral corruption. More importantly, teenagers are often allowed to go to the mall because it is thought that they will be safe there, but once inside the mall, are framed as threats to safety and order. This construction, as Chapter 3 examined, is not enacted by the adult population alone. Teenagers participate in the social construction of safety, but not merely as a (re)production of parental views. Stereotypes are exaggerations but not always fabrications. Teenagers must know, for their own safety’s sake, what is (stereo)typically dangerous or ill-advised.

You’d be scared to go by yourself [to the mall] back when you were younger. When you were 13, 14 years old--you wouldn’t want to be by yourself. You’d be scared some big bully would come and knock you over, take your money. Now, you just know everybody. When you live down in a secluded area where, like, the mall’s like a five minute walk, like right there, you get to know everybody in there. Like, you can meet your family in the mall, because it’s so...everybody’s there. So you go there and you say, “Oh hi, how are you doing?” They’re all your friends now.

female, 17 (R.5)
(Emphatically) You don't even show up by yourself [at 13]. I don't know, I guess it's not cool when you're younger. Like, grade 7. And before that, you're always with your parents, unless you're at a friend's house.

female, 18 (R.22)

Adolescence is a time of “learning the ropes,” including the adage that there is “safety in numbers.” If teenagers feel safe--from physical abuse, from status degradation--only in groups, they must reconcile the fear created by their own group formation. What is of particular interest is that teenagers, in forging some independence for themselves, look to their peers rather than their parents for this type of protection. However, once ‘safe’ in a group of teenagers, the individuals find themselves perceived as a threat to the safety of others.

I don't think they like us hanging out because we're in a big group. I think that a lot of people, when they see us, they think that we're troublemakers. Automatically, just seeing us in a big group. Because we're in a big group, and we're teenagers, so they're thinking that we're going to get up to mischief. My mom thinks that, too. In stores they, like, watch us so much. Like, if you go in to buy anything, they just assume... It doesn't really bother me because I know that I don't do anything so it doesn't really matter. But if I'm with just, like, a couple of friends, then it doesn't really matter. But if we're in a big group, that's when they care.

female, 14 (R.26)

Thus, one way to reconcile such a contradiction may be to embrace it as a “fact of life,” thus returning it to the adult population as their problem.

While parents’ perceptions of safety in the mall (policed and controlled by other adults) are often ambivalent, it may be that, in the face of the other
alternatives (street corners, parks), the mall appears to be the lesser evil. For any one of a variety of reasons, many parents allow their teenage children to spend unsupervised time at the mall. To return briefly to power-control theory and the role gender plays in the opportunities available to teenagers, teenagers themselves may construct limits for themselves based on gender.

Actually, guys were mall rats too. But they're, you know... they're more into sports too. Actually, I think they are. I know it's sexist to say but like, my friends... They play street hockey or whatever, and you don't see girls playing street hockey. Well, baseballs sometimes, but, you know, they're [boys] always doing that. They have another choice, I guess.

female, 18 (R.24)

While this comment points to perceived gender differences in the options available for free time, this did not recur in any of the other interviews. Rather, the recurrent theme regarding gender differences and opportunity concerns the safety of teenagers--especially young women--in public, and the impact this has on parental limits, such as curfews.

For teens, the mall is often one of the first settings of freedom and a symbol of their emancipation from the home world of adult supervision.

I basically grew up by myself, so that's why I started hanging out at the mall. 'Cause there was nowhere else for me to go. There'd be no one home at my house, so I'd always go to the mall with all my friends. There was a group of six of us, at first, that all grew up in the same neighborhood. We were all really tight, so we'd always just go and hang out at the mall. I think my childhood would've been really boring without the mall being right there.

male, 18 (R.28)

Female: It's like, "Yeah, fourteen! I can walk by myself!"
JBS: Where did you walk to?
Female: *The mall!* *(laughing)*

female, 18 (R.16)

With the liberation from adult supervision comes the freedom to define the use of time, the freedom to do nothing. Shopping is associated with “adult activity”; it implies access to resources and control over decisions. Thus, adolescent shopping practices are an experience of adulthood in general, while often a rejection of adults in particular (namely, the refusal of parental accompaniment). As such, the mall, as a center for shopping, may be taken as a symbol of the adult world; entrance without the assistance of one’s parents is the first step to membership. But the mall has already been familiarized by parents through shopping trips with children. Shopping with one’s mother, for instance, serves as a *rite de passage* for many youth, particularly young women, as it teaches the practice of shopping through demonstration.

Hanging out does not, in practice, preclude shopping; however, it is generally associated, in the minds of teenagers and adults, with “doing nothing.” A contradiction in terms, or so it appears, this anti-activity is an implicit—and often unintentional—affront to the work ethic and an explicit reminder to other adults in the mall of their own lack of leisure time. In this respect, adolescents comprise a status group analogous to Veblen’s leisure class; possessing a wealth of time, youth may appear in the eyes of adults as conspicuous wasters (consumers) of time.  

While there are real instances of teenage delinquency in the mall, ranging from shoplifting to assault, the prevalence of the moral panic attached to mall-lingering suggests a non-moral motivation. The derision directed at
hanging out at the mall may point to adult jealousy\(^9\) which teenagers internalize and direct at their peers as a preparation for, and integration into the adult world.

**Female:** It's sad. Because it's pathetic.
**Male:** She thinks it's a waste of my life.
**Female:** It's pathetic. *(laughing)* It's a waste of time. You could be doing better things. Like doing his school work at home...

female, 18 (R.27); male, 18 (R.28)

There are a number of limits to freedom in the mall, not all of which stem from the mall's private interests, manifested as constraints for behavior and activities. What the research has consistently shown is that the mall's rules, while influential, are repeatedly subverted and negotiated. Perhaps the most influential limit to freedom comes from the teenagers themselves, in terms of what is "cool." Peer definitions of acceptable behavior--often in contradiction to the mall's definitions--curtail certain activities. For example, many of the teenagers reflected on the taboo against being in the mall with one's parents, particularly at the younger end of the adolescent spectrum.

*A lot of my friends won't go to the mall with their parents. I guess because they don't want to be seen at the mall with their parents. I don't know, like, I don't care. I go with my mom. I go with my mom all the time. She's the one with the money most of the time!*(laughs)

female, 18 (R.22)

*You know, if people saw you with your mother, they'd start laughing, or I don't know. It's embarrassing...*

female, 18 (R.24)

The presence of parents often radically changes the definition of the mall to no longer a "social" space. If a teenager is shopping with a parent, and all of
his or her friends are in the mall at the same time, there is a collision of life worlds, and embarrassment often results. Thus, peer pressure may limit who is included; one cannot comfortably socialize with parents. This limit, however, is mediated by the age of the teenager. The younger teenagers (generally, 16 and under) are most limited by adolescents' own version of ageism. As they get older, teenagers may grow more sure of their own identity and autonomy, and are thus less threatened by, and more readily accepting of, the presence of parents. If peer derision is no longer perceived as a high risk, teenagers may even invite parents to shop with them. At this point, parental accompaniment is less a tool for learning how to shop, and more a means of shopping, as parents generally have greater access to disposable income.

Also limiting the freedom of choice are the stereotypes of teenagers, particularly in groups. This stereotype may be an obstacle in two significant ways. Through policing by others, certain expectations of delinquency constrain the freedom experienced by teenagers to socialize in groups, and through self-policing, which is the strategic goal of a stereotype. Adolescents may hesitate to socialize in large groups in order to distance themselves from the stereotype. By aligning themselves with the adult population and their values, many youth mark the progression between childhood and adulthood.

It's really important to me what adults think of me. I don't really care what kids think of me, really. But it's what adults, older people, really older people think of me. That's how my attitude is based on. I'll act for them, basically. I want them to see that I'm a responsible person, I can get a job, they can trust me. I don't know, it's just something...it's what I
want them to see. Not some punk kid who's going to, you know...

male, 18 (R.18)

Female 1: And you don't go with a big group to the mall because, I mean, it's so stupid. In this big pack. You just feel like a mall rat.
Female 2: Yeah, that's what they do.
Female 1: You just feel, yeah... It's more noticeable if there's a large group.

female 1, 18 (R.20); female 2, 18 (R.21)

I passed that adolescent stage. I don't get interested in making a big commotion, in being loud and... I have this thing, I don't like being with one or two girls. I hate being in groups of girls. I hate being stereotyped as the, you know, the stupid mall girls. Like the stupid jean jackets hanging off their shoulders and, like, looking like they're on a teenage crisis hotline. You know what I mean? Like, I don't want... I look at these people and I'm, like, "Oh god, I hope I was never like that." Or the guys chasing the girls around, yelling obscenities at them. It's like, come on. I know the mall's the place to do it, you know, because other than the street, and at school...like, that's like another really small...where you can go and heckle people. And your parents aren't going to say, "Watch your language," or teachers, "Go down to the office."

female, 18 (R.17)

The degree of concern over their status in the eyes of adults appears to be mediated by the age of the teenagers. Like the changing role of parents in shopping, hanging out in large groups shifts as teenagers age. Younger teenagers are much more likely to hang out in large groups despite their recognition of the stereotypes associated with youth in groups.

I hate doing something in a small group, and then feeling like I missed out on something. Missed out on something better. Like, if somebody else was doing something, like, if other people... Like, if I go in a small group, and there's another group that's doing something else, I don't want to miss anything. Like,
I don’t know, even if I have a special outing with my family or something, and even if it’s going to be super fun, I don’t want to go. ’Cause I don’t want to miss out on anything. Like, I know, with my friends, they talk about stuff for a long time afterwards. And I hate it so much! I don’t really mind it as much when they’re with their friends from grade 6 or whatever. I don’t really mind if they’re with their friends and talking because I didn’t know them then. But if they say, “Oh, we did this,” then I’m like, “Oh, why did I have to go and miss out on that?”

female, 14 (R.26)

This respondent’s worries suggest that one’s presence in large groups may be deemed a requirement for peer interaction. If a large majority of hanging out involves talking, then one must be able to participate in the conversation in order to feel truly present and involved.

Teenagers, especially those over 16, want to be seen as individuals, if not “proto-adults.” Large groups of teenagers (and here I am not referring to specifically male groups, but also to female and mixed-sex groups) may be intimidating to adults and teenagers alike. Adults often fear the corruption of youth by such groups, framed more often as the spectacular “gangs” in the media. Teenage reticence to participate in large groups may be a sign that representations of adult fears are having the desired effect. It may also be that teenagers do not feel they have the freedom to associate in large groups because of the consequences for image.

- the mall as a meeting place -

Malls allow youth the freedom of distance between themselves and their daily authority figures (apart, of course, from the mall’s sit-in parents, the security guards). This is a necessary distance as it provides opportunities for
self-directed choices, experimentation and observance of adults who are not trying to serve as role models. Free of parents, but still in the adult world, the mall experience can reward the individual with a sense of maturity, even insofar as making one's first unsupervised purchase.

We'd go to friends' houses, too, but also to the mall. Just to get out of the house. Maybe. Yeah, maybe both of us [she and her friend] to get out of the house. Sort of be kind of mature. Go to the mall together, like grown-ups.

female, 18 (R.24)

The majority of adults have access to both a private realm in which they may exert control—the home—and to a social realm that welcomes them. Teenagers, under the drinking age and often under the driving age, have no such luxury. Lack of a social space is not limited to teenagers, of course; homeless adults, for example, have no private space of their own, erasing the distinction between public and private. In the case of teenagers, finding—indeed, creating—a meeting ground is often difficult. Malls, with no specific age limit (unlike bars), no entrance fee (unlike clubs and amusement parks) and often readily accessible (thus not requiring a means of transportation), provide a possibility for such a ground.

I graduated to the mall, 'cause I used to hang out at the pool hall. But the pool hall, if you want to go there, you have to have money. Lots of money. I got so good at pool, I'd win all their money, and no one wanted to play with me, so I'd end up going to play pool by myself. And I got pretty bored, so then I started hanging out at the mall more and more often and I was always the one saying, “Let's go to the mall. Let's go to the mall. Let's go to the mall!” And now I've created all these monsters! (laughing)

male, 18 (R.28)
It's a meeting place. And then after they'd meet there, they'd go off and splinter, and do their own thing, outside the mall. Like, the mall's a common place where everybody can meet. I think it's just regarded as a meeting ground. It's a place that's...it's common to all of us. We all share it. Anybody can go. You might not be welcome there once you enter, but anybody can go. I think the fact that we all share it, we all use it in whatever way is suitable to our needs.

female, 18 (R.15)

Yeah, and you can come here, it doesn't matter how old you are. And it's, like, pretty much the same [as a club or bar] because you can...but you're not dancing, but you're still talking and you're seeing all the same people you would see at a dance club.

female, 18 (R.16)

I started going to the mall when I was 13. Yeah. 'Cause you didn't drive, so you couldn't really go anywhere, unless there was something specific going on. And if there wasn't, then you didn't really have anything to do. So we'd go to the mall, but we wouldn't shop or anything. We didn't really even wander. We'd just sit down (laughs). Talk to people.

female, 18 (R.22)

These comments, however, require some qualifications regarding access. Some malls have instituted age restrictions. The Mall of America, for example, requires that teenagers under 16 be accompanied by an adult over 21 on Friday and Saturday nights. As well, while malls have no entrance fees per se, and are often accessible by foot, there are parking fees and bus fares that may prohibit some teenagers from visiting some or all malls.

While the research has not focused on alternatives which provide similar opportunities as malls, one must recognize that they do exist. Youth centers are one such alternative. Unlike malls, however, they are neither abundant nor financially secure, making their availability an uncertainty. As well, youth
centers have an institutional dimension which may be unattractive to teenagers, especially if their interest in the mall is in any way motivated by the heterogeneity of the crowd. Unlike youth centers, malls offer the additional presence and spectacle of adults.

A meeting place provides teenagers with a space in which to make and socialize with friends. This certainly occurs at school, but within an adult-structured framework that may impinge on the choices of teenagers--good and bad--regarding with whom they socialize. In many respects, malls (t)imulate neighborhoods, with the qualification that neighborhood green spaces, while inhospitable in January, offer far more freedom than the mall if they are safe.

Yeah, we met people too. Like, people we didn’t even know. Like, they’d be, you know, mall rats too, I guess you could say. And we’d just talk. They usually just come up and ask for a smoke or something. And then... Well, somebody would always come up and like, sit with us, even though they didn’t know us, and start talking. Yeah. Some people are there all the time. It’s kind of like their hang out. They go there not to shop but just to, you know, be there with their friends and socialize. Back then, I’d shop really only if I needed something. But, you know, what do I really need? I didn’t have any money so...

female, 18 (R.24)

Seriously, just say I come to the mall with you, and I see two other people and they’re just sitting there and they don’t know you but I know them. So I sit down, and I’m, like, “OK, this is my friend Jen, and blah blah blah,” and they’re like, “Hi.” And then, if you see each other every single day, then they’re like, by a week, they’re like, “Hey Jen, how are you?” Now you’re friends with them.

female, 18 (R.16)
These insights suggest that the mall, as a common meeting ground, brings together teenagers in a positive way, rather than, as adults fear, in a way that produces delinquency through association. Given that teenagers tend to visit many malls, and not just the one closest to home and/or school, there is the opportunity to come into contact with youth from elsewhere in the city. It is true that this interaction can lead to fights over territorial boundaries, but that seems to be the exception. More generally, the mall can also positively broaden the social circles which may otherwise be restricted to neighborhood and school peers.

Hanging out as a practice is virtually synonymous with its predominant location—the food court—in the minds of teenagers. A proprietary sense may develop if the food court is used repeatedly, giving rise to the notion of “our” food court, or “our” tables.

Well, like the mall only consists of the food court then [when with friends]. The food court and the [all-ages dance club]. That’s all the mall is. The mall doesn’t go past the Second Cup because after the Second Cup is shopping. The mall doesn’t exist, that part doesn’t exist. You park by the food court, you walk in the food court doors, and that’s all it is. It’s a big restaurant...
[later in the interview]
Actually, my friends usually sit in the exact same table every single day, so you can know exactly where they’re going to be. So you can walk into the mall and the first thing you see is them. And you walk over here and you see them [one group], and you walk over here and you see them [another group]. Everybody I know is in this mall. Like, I can guarantee you, when I walk into that food court, there will be a million people I know. So I can just sit down, have a coffee with them.

female, 18 (R.16)
Recalling that Lefebvre's representational space produces on the symbolic level, and thus doesn't achieve the reification that representations of space do vis à vis architecture, it is possible to locate instances of territoriality within the mall generally, and within the food court especially. The tactics of appropriating the space, practicing it as one's own, are varied. Most effective appears to be the repetitiveness of social actions. This gives the teenagers an intersubjectively understood meeting ground to call their own, but it is not restricted to their understanding alone. Other patrons, especially other teenagers, must recognize the association between certain areas and certain teenagers in order for the marking of territory to be symbolically 'real.' Moreover, security guards recognize the adolescent claims to space, but do so in order to better police them rather than to reproduce teenager-constructed boundaries.

I've been doing [patrolling] for the mall for two years now. I'm also on the downtown beat, which means that I come into contact with a lot of the youth shelters and homes. If I have 5 or 6 missing persons, I know where I'll find them. Come in here around 9 at night, and I know I'll find them in the mall.

male, police officer

Food courts work as magnets to draw customers into the mall. However, the power of attraction may be so strong that no-loitering signs and security guards are required to pry people loose from the food court. One can invariably find a security officer in the food court of Central Mall each weekday lunch time, located near the tables which local students have claimed as their own. Thus creating a meeting ground makes it easier for teenagers to locate
themselves, but also assists in the security officers’ surveillance of them. Here is the ambivalence of the tactician; tactics are used by those on the move who elude capture by continually moving, practicing place on the move. Hanging out in the food court is a quasi-stationary practice, making it easier for the controlling bodies to locate those whom they seek to control. However, hanging out in the food court is often interrupted by walks around the mall in order to avoid ‘capture’ for loitering.

• loitering: breaking the speed limit •

Staying in the food court is contingent upon the payment of rent, or “consideration”, in the form of food or drink, and is subject to the policy on loitering. Maximum time signs remind individuals that a stay in the food court should be limited to 20 minutes, much like minimum speed signs. Socializing, however, does not fit neatly into 20 minute intervals. Instead, adolescents find ways of staying longer in the food court, by using empty coffee cups to present the appearance of a purchase, befriending security guards to increase the threshold of tolerable difference, taking turns buying food or drinks so that one person at the table always has something, and taking occasional walks around the mall in order to turn the loitering stop clock back to zero, or to simply break up the boredom of doing nothing in a place where nothing unusual happens. Loitering, as stasis, requires tactical movement, of the individual (going for a walk), or of money (buying a drink).

Before [grade 13], I'd go every weekend. With my friend, from grade six on, we hung out there. Yeah, every weekend, even though it was boring or whatever. We just sat around the food court and you know...we were mall rats. (laughing) Oh yeah,
yeah. It's true! I don't know, I guess afterwards I thought, you know...that's why, maybe I stopped [hanging out at the mall], because I thought it was pathetic, just sitting in a mall. It was so repetitive. 

female, 18 (R.24)

I like to sit in the food court, but a lot of my friends don't. They get bored, so they're like, "Let's go." They don't really know (laughing) where they want to go, they just don't want to sit there. I like sitting there, having a smoke.

female, 18 (R.22)

As with the derogatory remarks aimed at others in the mall, teenagers (particularly those over 16) often deride the practice of hanging out in order to establish distance between themselves and the stereotypes to which they are subjected. This includes the putting down of one's own activities when younger as an assertion of present maturity and responsibility.

Smoking was mentioned by many of the respondents in conjunction with hanging out in the food court. Because the remainder of the mall space is a non-smoking environment, smoking a cigarette, like having a coffee, legitimates the use of a food court table. While this might be a tactical maneuver to avoid the charge of loitering, it also raises concerns as to the consequences of social life in the mall. On top of caveat emptor, perhaps the mall should come with a Surgeon General's warning.

But it's funny. I just got off the phone with my friend and I said, "Well, do you want to meet me at the mall?" And she's like, "No." She was supposed to get her hair done. She said, "The mall causes cancer." And I go, "What are you talking about?" She goes, "I just came to that realization." She was sitting there, and there's nothing to do but smoke, and she says, "The mall causes cancer." Just like the smoke around you.

female, 18 (R.17)
Male: If they made the mall no-smoking, a lot of people would stop hanging out here.
Female: They'd die.
Male: I wouldn't come.
Female: He didn't want to come to this Tim Horton's [for the interview] because it's no-smoking.
Male: I smoke around 12, 13 cigarettes. You sit there, you're talking to someone, you have a cigarette. Fifteen minutes later, you're still sitting there, and you're, like, "OK..."
Female: "I'm bored now! I need another smoke."
Male: So smoking plays a major part in it.
Female: Yeah, it does.
Male: It does. Even my friends who don't smoke hang out in the smoking area because that's where everybody else is.

male, 18 (R.28); female, 18 (R.27)

Many malls have joined the trend of making communal spaces non-smoking. While this certainly has positive effects for the non-smokers in the mall, it may also be viewed as a strategic move to rid the mall of some of the core smokers: teenagers and the unemployed.

Loitering is the most transgressive aspect of hanging out as “common” delinquency (i.e., not involving theft or assault), falling into the realm of unlawful activity. To stop moving is to stop one node in the movement of commodities. This is not to say that loitering is not consumption; loitering involves the consumption of time, or a place in which to hang out, and of the movement of others via people-watching. The mall’s controlling agents, however, frame loitering as anti-consumption as it is not explicitly shopping. Given that the individuals in question are teenagers, the activity of loitering is expected to be disorderly, even though it may be done in an orderly (seemingly appropriate) manner. Even if teens are “behaving,” they must still obey--or
reference through subversion—the order to move. Mall rats, defined in a variety of ways by the respondents, appear to be those who most exaggerate the aspect of loitering.

All my friends were mall rats, so I'd be there [in East Mall]. They were there. As soon as school was finished, they were there. They'd be there until 6, they'd walk home, eat supper and come back at 8, after dinner.

female, 18 (R.15)

Actually, I know one guy and he's still, he's always there. And, actually I know two guys. One from [the local Catholic school] and one from [my high school]. And they're always there. One of them is 24 and the other one's 19. Like, I said, "So what do you do during the day?" And he's like, "Hang out at [East Mall]." He doesn't even work. He lives at home with his parents. I don't know, I think they're bums, honestly. Like, unemployed and they're not even looking [for a job]. Like, he was ashamed to admit it. He was like, "Do you really want me to tell you honestly?" And I'm like, "Yeah." He's like, "I hang out at [East Mall] all day."

female, 18 (R.24)

And then [in the mall] there's the few older, weird guys. Like, the guys who sit there and chain smoke two packs or whatever, and have the leather jackets and the long greasy pony-tails that are the mall rats. Like, they're 19 and up, and sit there and wait for their girlfriends for 4 hours because they don't have anything else to do. Like, mall rats would be at [East Mall] probably now [Sunday, 3 pm] because...or, like, after school, because there's nothing else to do on a Sunday afternoon. So they go to the mall and just sit there. They sit along where the It Store is, you know? They sit along, mall rats, they sit along the smoking part all along the edge. Well, I think there are universal mall rats that just sit there. I don't think they get jobs. They go to Tim Hortons until they get kicked out. And then, like, they hang out across the road from [the local Catholic school] where there's a sub shop and that, and an arcade. They hang out there. You drive by
at 11 o'clock, and they're all sitting there in the parking lot, playing, like, hackysack or something. Those are the mall rats, I think. Those are the mall rats that hang out at the mall, and then they go there. I recognize a couple of them [from school]. I think those are the ones that are into drugs and stuff like that and I think that's why the cops are there [at the plaza].

female, 18 (R.25)

While hanging out at the mall is a teenage activity, there is no guarantee that a mall rat will graduate from the mall into the adult world. The opinions teenagers have of mall rats reaffirms the characterization that Morse and others have made of mall rats as persistent loiterers. However, the definition of mall rats as "nonconsuming loiterers"\textsuperscript{12} (my emphasis) belies the fact that these individuals are \textit{avid} consumers, of the mall space, its spectacle, and to a lesser extent, commodities such as food and drink.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{the changing face of the mall}
\end{itemize}

As representational space, the social world created by teenagers in the mall is not one that enjoys any sense of permanence. In fact, it is highly differentiated by time.

Female 1: It's their [the elderly] mall right now [9:30 am].
JBS: What time does it become your mall?
Female 1: After school.
Female 2: Or lunch hour, even.

female 1, 18 (R.20); female 2, 18 (R.21)

Male 1: It's only on certain days, some days when you get a lot of trouble in the mall.
Male 2: Fridays.
Male 1: Yeah, skip day.
Male 2: Fridays and maybe Saturday. The weekend nights aren't bad for malls because of clubs, dance
clubs. Friday from 7 ‘til 9, it’s just packed. Everybody’s hanging out.

male 1, 17 (R.10); male 2; 17 (R.11)

Like, in the summer time, we don’t go there [the mall] as much ‘cause there’s more things to do. Like, you can go down to the beach, go mini-golfing, or all that kind of stuff. But in the winter, it’s too cold. And a lot of us don’t have jobs, so we can’t afford to go anywhere, really. So we just go and hang out at the mall. It’s free.

male, 18 (R.28)

In addition to the role played by the time of day, week or year, there is the function of age, or time of life, which has been a recurrent theme throughout the data analysis. Teenagers turn to the mall as a meeting place because of a perceived lack of alternatives, many age specific. This has bred a trend, itself influential, apart from the necessity from which it is borne.

Female 1: Well, as soon as the license hits, then you can go anywhere! But before that, even to the movies... Like there was more freedom than when you were younger because your mom wouldn’t let you take the bus to the movies because it’s not really around here. You have to go to [South Mall], or down to [North Mall]. So that was considered freedom.
Female 2: Yeah, grade 9 or 10. And then when everyone got their license, it’s even more...
Female 1: Like, we’d still go to the movies and stuff, but we’d go further. Like, we’d start going to [Upper Mall]. I think just ‘cause we could! (laughing) The same movie would be playing at a mall a lot closer, but [Upper Mall] is the nicest theater, and it’d be like, “We can get up there. Let’s go!”
Female 2: You just get bored of some places and now that you can go to others, you go.

female 1, 18 (R.20); female 2, 18 (R.21)

The cool kids spend a lot of time in the mall, but it depends again on age. Usually after 16 or 17, you meet other guys, and you have people driving so
they go other places. Other places... Well, to the movies during the day, to another friend's house...

male, 18 (R.18)

Grade 8. I think that's when you're 13 and you go to the mall and stuff. Yeah, I guess you'd go and hang out because that's where everyone else went. But now, I don't go to the mall unless I have to.

female, 18 (R.25)

In high school, going to the mall is a social thing. You'd go with your friends, you'd go to eat. If it was nighttime, you'd go see a movie. And now, it's more of something I do on my own. I just go to walk around, get out of the house and be around other people. It's not that you interact with them, but you're not by yourself, either.

female, 24 (R.1)

The description of the mall as boring was recurrent, even in interviews with teenagers who are currently spending large amounts of time hanging out at the mall. The logical extension of "nothing unusual is happening," boredom does not necessarily prompt teenagers to seek other venues for social life. Instead, they hold out hope for excitement, lowering their expectations of what the mall has to offer. Boredom, however, may also be read as a tactic in itself. Being bored (or boring) may be a relief from the stress of finding and defining activity, or a resistance to the attempts made by others to define "appropriate" activities for youth. Boredom, then, may be understood as low-risk resistance. Expected to be disruptive, the lethargic adolescent presence in the food court is often tolerated because it is relatively benign in comparison with shoplifting and vandalism. Boredom in the mall may be like the boredom of vacation is for Baudrillard: "intensified by the fact that it contains all the
elements of happiness and recreation."\textsuperscript{13} Intensified boredom becomes an act of transcendence from the boredom of everyday life.

Shopping malls are shrines to the cult of novelty. There are always new products to see and buy, new identities to try on. Such novelty may be a source of entertainment for young and old alike. Upping television's ante, malls allow the individual to "walk from channel to channel as the neon stores flick by," playing "every sense: smelling, tasting, touching, looking, desiring, fantasizing."\textsuperscript{14}

[Hanging out at the mall] is a fad. Where else can kids go? There just aren't enough facilities to keep them busy. They like the glamour of the mall.

male, police officer

Accelerated circulation of the new can be deceiving as the categories of products do not significantly change, as well as exhausting (and boring) in the relentless demand for the consumer to keep up. While they may not yet have been fully accepted into the realm of adulthood, older teenagers no longer must assert their transition out of childhood. As the patina of freedom from parents fades, the excitement of the perpetual novelty of the mall diminishes. While younger teenagers are neither uncritical consumers nor oblivious to marketing strategies, older teenagers have the advantage of perspective in understanding the changing role of the mall over time.

Poaching space from the mall, teenagers accomplish a transient sense of ownership over the mall, or parts thereof. Symbolic territorial boundaries disappear with the departure of their producers at the end of the day, to be reproduced the following day. They disappear also with the shift in focus--from
loitering to shopping—as individuals age, and are replaced by younger individuals. Territoriality within the mall is emergent; the mall is a socially mediated structure. In the mall, the temporary production of a social ground—lived space—is most obvious when it stands in contradiction to the commercial ground upon which it is built. Thus, it is the slowing down of the mall, via socializing and loitering, that best moves forward towards a representational space.

2 Williams, *Keywords*, 78.
3 Frederick, *As Time Goes By...*, 67-8.
7 Indeed, ranges even to murder. For example, Mountain Mall was the site of the murder of a teenager last year at the hands of other teens from the same high school; see for example, Jim Holt, “Teen Fatally Beaten: Trapped at Lime Ridge Mall by Gang with Bats,” *The Spectator* (Hamilton, Ontario), 29 May 1996, A1, 2.
8 Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*.
Working the Crowd: An Analysis of Space

The pleasure of being in a crowd is a mysterious expression of the enjoyment of the multiplication of numbers.

Charles Baudelaire

Something deeply hidden had to be behind things.

Albert Einstein

Shopping malls require movement on multiple levels. The commercial success of malls is measured by the circulation of commodities, itself dependent on the circulation of consumers. Teenagers, as we have seen, are participants in the movement of the mall. On one level, their shopping accomplishes the mall’s monetary circulation; on another, their movement in and between stores adds to the circulation of bodies, helping to create the mall’s “mad convection current.” Indeed, movement is ubiquitous in the mall. Even when sitting still in the food court, in a shoe store (one of the few stores with seating), or on a bench, the movement of the mall populace is never out of sight, and is always pulling the individual back into the flow. Loitering, as the mall’s framing of “doing nothing,” may appear to be anti-movement, but still references the imperative to move in the refusal to do so, in the enjoyment of others’ movement, and in the food court purchase which permits the brief period of stasis.

Thus, we find that the mall, like Fredric Jameson’s Bonaventure Hotel, “can only be represented in motion.” But more than this, the mall only exists
in motion. The mall cannot be reduced to its floor plan, its products, its advertising—in short, to its representations of space—because without the movement of bodies the mall is dead in a financial as well as a spatial sense. Mirrors, escalators, signs and special attractions may facilitate the movement of the crowd, but they never fully determine it. Malls require a kinetic component to bring the setting to life; this is the role of the crowd. As both the content and the means of the mall’s systems of circulation, the crowd preserves the potential for representational space through movement-as-practice.

The crowd is the keystone for the integrated practice of using the mall. As an analogy, the crowd demonstrates how disparate individuals (tactics) may fit themselves together to form a coherent whole which preserves the uniqueness of its constituent parts. As a resource, the crowd’s shifting role speaks to the fluidity—rather than to the fragmentation—of the meanings teenagers have of the setting. Finally, as a milieu, the crowd points to the spectrum of positions teenagers may take in the mall, as members of the crowd in general, of peer crowds, and as solitary individuals apart from the crowd. Teenagers are both members and users of crowds, (re)producing and transforming the mall. The crowd reconciles seemingly contradictory elements while preserving the ambivalence created in the tension between individual and group, and between place and space.
• the crowd as entertainment and audience •

As discussed in the preceding Chapters, the crowd plays a number of roles in the adolescents’ use of the mall. Serving as both spectacle and audience, the crowd acts as a social backdrop against which the tactics are played out.

We always have somebody interesting to look at, or there's always weird people, especially at [Central Mall]. You think of all the young people on the streets, and just people in general. They all...when it's cold, they're all in the mall, and people with physical impairments or psychological problems, mental instabilities, what not. There's a lot of those there. I don't want to say it because it sounds cruel. But it's just more interesting. You know what I mean? I can't stand all these people at [East Mall] because I know them already from school, and they know me. Yeah, I know them, and they know me. It's fun when they don't know who I am. And I can go to a mall and just walk around and, you know, no one knows who I am. But yeah, it is more interesting at [Central Mall]. You just find all kinds of people there. There's always something going on downtown, you know.

female, 18 (R.17)

This also raises the role of the crowd as a source of anonymity, which is discussed later in the Chapter. The presence of a peer crowd is often crucial for the mall to serve as a social space for teenagers. The mall may be a social setting in which to interact with and observe adults, but it is, more importantly, a setting for peer interaction.

Female: People go there, but they're adults, they're not teenagers. It's a fairly busy mall, it's just not jam packed with teenagers.

male, 18 (R.28); female, 18 (R.27)
When a mall is inhospitable or unattractive to teenagers, teenagers remove their presence, an absence accompanied by the disappearance of the potential for socializing in the mall. Thus, products, as the object of the shopper's gaze, are supplemented or supplanted by the crowd itself, the mall's mobile entertainment. The crowd is what often prevents the mall from deteriorating into a site of stupefaction. The mall can be a place of excitement. Even within a constraining commercial framework, the inclusion of the crowd preserves the potential for the mall to become a carnival.

Male: It's a place to go. It's a place to do something. Anything. You can go there, and you can sit there and because you're sitting at the mall and there's people there, you're less bored than if you were sitting at home doing nothing.

JBS: Is it ever fun to be at the mall?

Male: Yeah sometimes. Sometimes, we goof around and we'll joke around. Like, there was an incident where a mouse ran through the mall and my friend jumped up on the table and started screaming and yelling. (laughing) I mean, that's fun, that was funny, and interesting. I mean, we go there and we make complete asses out of ourselves. But we don't care because everybody there knows us and that's the way we are, and it, like, doesn't matter. The mall is a place to go.

male, 18 (R.28)

Boredom in the mall is permeated by the longing for excitement, and the waiting for it to happen. Like de Certeau's tactician who exploits moments as they appear, teenagers are vigilant in their readiness to take advantage of openings and disruptions that occur spontaneously and sporadically. With few responsibilities making demands on their time in the mall, teenagers have an excess of energy which translates into an excessive response, or disproportionate action, even when provoked by a common mouse. When
teenagers seize the moment, they exaggerate it through parody just as boredom in the mall is an exaggeration; when they act, they *act up*.

Besides a source of entertainment, the crowd may serve as an obstacle to be negotiated, much like the twists and turns of the mall corridors.

I'll go to [Mountain Mall]. Except last night because they had MidnightMadness, so I went to [East Mall] because I know [Mountain Mall] would be packed. Sometimes, I don't mind crowds. Like, around Christmas, it's just funny to watch people freaking out in malls. *(laughs)* Or if people shove, like my mom is a big shover, so... You have to keep up because she beelines around people and you have to keep up with her. Like, my boyfriend shoves people too. It's so embarrassing! *(laughs)*

female, 18 (R.25)

Well, people tend to think linearly. School and everything conditions you for it. I don't know if [people in the mall] always move in a straight line, but I know that when they're walking, they have their established direction. If you're going in that direction, you're walking on the right side; if you're oncoming, you're on the left. It's like traffic rules. And if you break that... I always seem to break it because I'm left-handed so things are always backwards for me. I always tend to walk on the other side or... I'm always dancing with people. I honestly think that if they want traffic to go the way it does, they should put in medians. And where there's a door, the median should have a break, and you should signal, go through. Because it's really difficult. If you think about it, if you're trying to get into a store that's on [the other] side, and the person on this side is trying to get into that side, what are you supposed to do? It's difficult. It's very difficult to break the flow of traffic. You have to, like, charge through.

female, 18 (R.15)

This insight brings to light the parallel between good behavior and good driving--*bonne conduite*, a pun made by Virilio. Like the Beaubourg museum for
Baudrillard, the mall is a system of circulation, pushing and pulling bodies by using its stock of commodities (rather than using suction and propulsion as Baudrillard jokingly suggests). But the crowd is not reduced to a homogeneous mass; it retains its differences and its different responses to the rules of circulation.

Thus, while the conceptions of space attempt to control the movement of the crowd, the possibility for unscheduled turns and routes is not erased. Indeed, it is the preservation of the crowd--as a concession from the mall, as an assertion from the crowd's constituents--which guarantees the existence of opportunities for practice, for leaving traces that mark the (representational) space, if only for a brief time. For Benjamin, "Living means leaving traces." How these traces are marked or erased, in and through the crowd, points to the ways in which the mall-as-space is accomplished. Chapter 3 discussed the mechanisms by which teenagers are traced, while Chapters 4 and 5 examined the visible traces left by teenagers. As shoppers, the passages of teenagers are marked in the stores by sales figures and stock reorder forms. Outside the stores, their routes may be traced via the store and product logos on their apparel and shopping bags. Apart from shopping, teenagers leave traces in the mall through their very presence--especially a group presence. Loudness, pranks, shocking appearance, fights and sheer numbers mark the space, and in their wake, others (including other teenagers) fortify the traces by discussing, often in derogatory terms, what has just passed. Traces may also be left on the physical site, via graffiti and other vandalism, but, like the more
symbolic traces, are temporary as the mall is wiped clean after each business day.

• the crowd as camouflage •

While the above has focused on the leaving of traces, the crowd also plays a part in the hiding of a presence. Like the mass production of commodities which erases all traces of the workers’ labor, the crowd may erase all traces of the individual if the crowd is sufficiently distilled to a mass. However, the anonymity of the crowd is not always an alienating force; instead, it may be a tactical resource for the teenager.

If I’m by myself, I just blend in. No one notices, like, I don’t notice anybody when I’m by myself.

female, 18 (R.25)

[on her practice of going to malls when she’s angry]
Female: Yeah, ‘cause you’re lost in the shuffle, you know what I mean? OK, look at this mall, these tables [the mall is virtually empty]. There’s all this open space. You can just walk around. There’s nobody to take it out on, you know what I mean? But when you’re with all these other people [at Mountain Mall] and you’re just, like...no one can see how upset I am, how I’m running around like a madman, know what I mean? I’m just kind of like another person, another face.

JBS: And that’s comforting?
Female: Yeah. And also, I’m usually mad at my friends, or my boyfriend or something, and they’re here [at East Mall]. So I can’t come here. (laughs) And they also know where they can find me. Whenever I’m not home, everybody knows where I am, at [East Mall]. So I have to go somewhere they won’t find me. Sometimes, the crowd frustrates me more, but other times, it’s like, “OK, this is good, this is a crowd. No one can see me, this is fine.” And then I walk out of the mall, and I’m happy again.

female, 18 (R.16)
What is of particular interest here is the opportunity for anonymity, which has traditionally been unavailable to women in public places. As a controlled, policed space, the mall provides a measure of safety which permits women to assume the role of the flâneur without the fears attached to walking alone in the street, particularly after dark. This may be said of people in general. Streets have become unwelcoming to men and women and mall crowds, besides offering anonymity, provide safety in numbers (and may temporarily dissipate the fear of men, particularly on the part of women).

Hiding in the crowd may be an escape from the pressures of individuality, or it may be a reaffirmation of it, as the teenager may find solidarity amongst the anonymous crowd.

[Central Mall] is just a class all its own. I think it's just the best mall. All the other ones, like you go up to [Mountain Mall], and it's all, like, the mountain people and for some reason, I can't relate to mountain people. They have a different lingo, they do different things, the malls are too, like, clean and they're too normal. I don't understand, like, parents, rich parents, with their kids and, you know, "Mom, buy me this, buy me that," kind of kids. In [Central Mall], you see all the strugglers and people with real problems. And I just feel more comfortable around that, you know? And I don't feel like, you know, I'm being judged or something. Like, some places you go, you know, you'll just go there and it'll be a certain group of people that you associate with the mall or whatever, and they'll, like, make jokes, like you don't belong there. But [Central Mall], it's just anyone, it's whoever wants to go. It's cool, you know? Whoever you are, it doesn't matter.

female, 18 (R.17)

In these remarks we see a marked difference from the crowd as audience. The nominal personal pronoun shifts from “we” to “I” as the focus is not on group,
but on solitary activity. The crowd may erase the presence of the individual, but the individual may also use the crowd to disguise his or her solitary presence. It is often neither cool nor safe to be alone; thus the crowd becomes a means of achieving time alone without sacrificing status or safety. On the other hand, being in a group of teenagers may be also be a cause for concern, as it attracts suspicion and places certain expectations on the members. Here, the social conception of adolescent groups constrains the crowd's role as a hiding place for teenagers. Moreover, the mall's commonplace status means that, while hidden in the crowd, the individual's presence in the mall is likely known. For example, the "missing" teenagers from the youth home are easily located by the police officer in the mall. The friends who are not answering their phones are assumed to be at the food court.

This does not mean that the crowd does not serve as a form of camouflage for groups of teens. A large crowd can hide actions from prying eyes (facilitating, for example, shoplifting), or disguise the size of a group within the larger crowd. Thus, while a group of three teenagers may be stopped by the police in the street, they are relatively free in the mall. As well, a crowd, or group, of teenagers may disguise individuality, for better or worse. Crowds provide a recess from the pressure of identity, from the demand to "be yourself". Interestingly, the derogatory remarks directed at blending into a peer group are not likewise attached to blending into the larger crowd. This may perhaps be due to the adult component of the crowd which provides greater heterogeneity than found in peer groups. It may also be due to the perceived goal of blending. Whereas hiding in the mall crowd is an individual's
choice for anonymity, blending into a peer crowd is often perceived as the lack of individual courage to assert individuality.

For teenagers, the role of the crowd shifts just as the overall role of the mall does over time, minute to minute, day to day, year to year. Remaining unchanged is the crowd's practice of movement. This is not to say that the movement of the crowd guarantees a practiced place. While Jameson may overstate the case, asserting that the mechanisms of movement—particularly escalators and elevators—"replace movement," it is true that the routes through the mall are increasingly policed and scripted, making the practice of movement all the more difficult. Movement can slide into rote exercise, much like following marching orders. However, it can also be a conscious choosing of directions, even when those choices are in accordance with the preferences of the mall. As well, movement can veer towards somnambulism, introducing the potential for subconscious impulses to turn distracted, hypnotic walking into wandering led by chance and whim. Movement through the crowd may be that of the flâneur.

• narrative strolls •

Using the crowd for personal pleasure, the flâneur engages the spectacle at a distance, watching more than participating, window shopping more than purchasing. The flâneur always has the alibi of observation, which "accredits his idleness." Maintaining the reputation for laziness, the modern adolescent flâneur is still the consuming spectator and stroller. The crowd, even more than the mall setting, provides a maze of uncharted routes and unexpected turns. The arcade marked the interiorization of the street and since then, the
interiorization has increased, as has the concomitant controlling of the space as it rests on private property. While the bustle of the streets may have been transferred to the mall corridors, it has simultaneously been transformed through scripting and regulation. Thus the passages through the street--in the arcade, the mall--become “underscored, symbolized, reified and replaced,” calling into question the opportunities for the dynamic, unstructured paths of the flâneur.

Teenagers who literally push out a space for themselves are like the flâneur “who demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forego the life of gentleman of leisure.” But is this modern adolescent flâneur the same character who strolled through the arcades of 19th century Paris? Yes and no. Teenagers bear the same stigma of laziness as the flâneur. As an affront to the work ethic, the adolescent flâneur in the mall becomes the object of a moral panic much more than the historical predecessor. Even more so, the teenager is subject to age-specific prejudices, but these stereotypes appear to be taken as part of the everyday backdrop, occasionally the source of complaint or subversion, but generally a fact of life to which teenagers are indifferent. Thus the mall is more controlled than the arcade with regards to the level of scrutiny trained on the individuals within the setting. In general, malls are far more controlled environments than arcades as advertising, techniques of surveillance, architectural strategies and so on have become increasingly fine-tuned.

The flâneur of old was able to walk at a leisurely pace, distractedly sampling from the department store window displays and the spectacle of the
crowd. In the mall, the acceleration of circulation intensifies distraction to the point at which the distracted stance of the *flâneur* becomes its opposite, contemplation. Like roadside billboards, the mall's messages are distilled into a frenzy of lights and signs, catching the eye of the passer-by, caught up in the flow of mall traffic. More than ever before, advertising and marketing pull the stroller in and impel him/her to purchase, and then to return to the flow, without wasting any time. This presents formidable obstacles to a type of walker who characteristically wastes time. However, these obstacles are not insurmountable. Loitering teenagers still move at a turtle's pace, creating an eddy (rather than a still pond, as loitering is still movement, just in a different direction, or form) for both themselves, and other mall patrons who may use the braking effect of the teenagers' tactics for their own benefit. Thus, consciously or not, the elderly presence in the food court may be an exploitation of the increase in tolerance because of the juxtaposition with the teenagers' presence.

While the model of the *flâneur* is analytically useful, and applicable in specific instances, it is limited in its ability to integrate the particular tactics by which teenagers move in and through the crowd, using it as maze, audience, entertainment, camouflage, and so forth. Two elements are missing from the *flâneur*, and likewise from de Certeau's poacher: differing levels of visibility and collectivity. The poacher has the connotation of a disguised appropriation of/on the other's territory, while the *flâneur* is visible even in the anonymous crowd by virtue of his/her slower pace. Both the poacher and the *flâneur* suggest the solitary individual, acting alone on the other's territory.
As was discussed earlier in the Chapter, teenagers engage in a variety of activities which range in their visibility, from overt exhibitionism to covert blending into the crowd. Besides the level of visibility chosen by the teenagers, there is also the degree of surveillance trained on them, rendering them visible. These two levels intersect at a number of points. When teenagers make themselves visible, be it through dress, actions, volume and so on, they make it easier for themselves to be located by the agents of control. This may not always be an unavoidable, uncontrollable and therefore tolerated symptom of socializing in the mall; it may also be an intentional effect on the part of the adolescents. Teenagers may reconcile the tension between watching and being watched, as Dick Hebdige suggests, by “hiding in the light,” which “translates the fact of being under scrutiny into the pleasure of being watched.” The symbolically creative appropriations of products, the mall setting and the crowd are now joined by the appropriation of the controlling gaze itself. The increasingly sophisticated system of identification and control can never be totally circumvented, thus a possible subversion of it is through embracing it and turning it to one’s own uses. Identity is, in many respects, a technique of control as it facilitates categorization and surveillance. By hiding in the crowd, the individual may undermine the process of identification.

Beyond the pleasures of being watched by peers, there is the additional enjoyment for teenagers of having a forum in which they are guaranteed a measure of attention on the part of adults. Thus, they may prove that they are responsible, well-behaved young adults. On the other hand, they may demonstrate to adults their resistance to the adult world. For example, the
run-in with the security guard and the teenager's performance may be viewed as a *rite de passage*. Not only does it add to social esteem in the eyes of peers who may value resistance to authority, it more broadly indoctrinates the youth into an adult world that is equally, if not as overtly, scrutinized. In a society that often dismisses youth, the degree of attention paid to them in the mall attests to their potential for impact. While the controlling parties may focus on the negative impacts, there is equal opportunity for teenagers to demonstrate their positive potential.

The concept of visibility is tied to that of collectivity, as often the most visible presence is a group presence. Unlike the poacher or *flâneur*, the data suggest that adolescents in the mall are to be found, more often than not, in groups. Rather than speak of a flock of *flâneurs*, we may instead reformulate our conception of the walker in order to better accommodate the differing degrees of collectivity involved in teenage practice of the mall. What remains fundamental is the element of movement. Like nomadic squatters, teenagers perform a daily appropriation of the mall by moving through it, giving rise to an accumulated proprietary meaning. Unlike poachers, squatters (re)appropriate the other's territory in plain sight through a collective and visible presence. The poacher's goal is to take something away; squatters make claims to space by adding to, rather than removing elements and meanings contained in the space.

It is essential, here, to recognize that movement is a practice, indeed *the* practice which incorporates all of the tactics of youth in the mall. As representational space produces on the symbolic level alone, it is *collective*
movement which produces the deepest and strongest meanings. The individual walker creates meanings on a personal level; when these become collective we may more properly speak of an adolescent social space.

There is a curious mix of contemplation and distraction in the movement through the mall. Representations of space attempt to script the passages through the mall, distracting the walker(s) from the potential for narrative (rather than narrated) strolls, led by personal choice and chance. Meanwhile, the pace of the walker may allow for a better contemplation of the mall. By slowing the speed of the mall, the loiterer has an opportunity to witness the passing of others, to subject advertising to concentrated study, to test the hidden limits of the setting. Alternatively, by speeding up the mall, by racing through its corridors, the façade of the mall blurs, counteracting the magnetic pull of window displays. Even the ever-emerging methods of control are appropriated and brought into the narration of the mall, subjected to contemplation, or dismissed with indifference.

The notion of narrative strolls marks a return to de Certeau's concept of the pedestrian speech act. Walking, as "an art of composing a path," results in an infinite diversity of enunciations, as paths change from step to step. Perhaps the best analogy from de Certeau is the tightrope walker:

Dancing on a tightrope requires that one maintain an equilibrium from one moment to the next by recreating it at every step by means of new adjustments; it requires one to maintain a balance that is never permanently acquired; constant readjustment renews the balance while giving the impression of "keeping" it.
This is the teenager in the mall, who occasionally loses his or her balance and falls back into representations of space. For de Certeau, walking implies both narration and movement, an enunciation of space. This brings to light not only the encompassing role of movement, by which the setting is moved literally and metaphorically, but also the pervasiveness of the activity of talking. Peripatetic contemplation is the apprehension and narration of the mall in transit; the movement both brings the place to life, as well as produces a space via the practice of movement.

Movement is the intersection of space and time, suggesting a model of the mall based on Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope. Bakhtin used the chronotope—literally, time space—to characterize the ways in which novels brought time and space to life through their intersection. Notions of absolute time and static space are transformed through the "intersection of axes and fusion of indicators." Stemming from Einstein's theory of relativity, the chronotope analytically illuminates the response of space to time, and the spatial qualities of time. Within the mall we find two chrontopes, one strategic, the other tactical. The representations of space construct a chronotope that privileges space over time through distractions and the "calculus of objects." In this way, a corridor which would take one minute to walk from end to end is stretched via window displays, benches and the general milling of the crowd; it now takes half an hour to reach the end, or longer depending on how many side trips the walker takes into the stores bordering the corridor. This is the nature of strategies, which master place through a specialized knowledge of how to resists the erosion of time.
Teenagers, as tactical users of the mall, do not possess control over a place, and must therefore rely on time. Their specialized knowledge is of how to use time to practice place, thus producing a representational, social space for their own use. The tactical chronotope, then, is a stretching of time; it includes the directions and velocities of the movements of teenagers within the mall. Comparison shopping is thus symbolically transformed from a result of the mall's stretching of space to a practice of movement which affords teenagers more activity with which to consume time. Hanging out as loitering, even more than shopping, slows the pace of the mall crowd, to the extreme at which distance nears the limit of zero and time continues to pass: standing still. Thus, while the mall-as-place attempts to control time, privileging distance and amount in the equation of movement, the tactical use of time produces spatial effects, allowing teenagers to create a sense of their own lived space.

1 Cited in Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire, 58.
5 Virilio, Speed and Politics, 90; see also Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, 2nd ed., eds. H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 221.
7 Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire, 169.
9 Jameson, Postmodernism, 42.
10 Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire, 41.
11 Jameson, Postmodernism, 42.
12 Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire, 54.
13 Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics.
14 Hebdige, Hiding in the Light, 35.
15 de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, 100.
Leaving the Mall--Concluding Remarks

To the Mallgather, I'm telling you, this is my learnings with respect to the Lurd of this Mall. In the Beforetimes, in the High Dollar Deis, malls was places of cargathers and hot kultourism, and all was shopping to the muzak sinfunnies of GasHave Maller.

Then comes the Betweentimes, the Final Dollar Deis, when affinity gropes attacked with Big Bucks to take over Malls for theirsown. Some of these Great Malls were called Secular Humanism Esplanade, Moral Majorette Phamly Plaza, Big Survivorist Center, and oft in the HolyWood Hills was the Gestalt Mall. Them was the days of the first Panic Wars that brut down the great Amerry-cannan empyre.

... Fer sure, we have the wolfpacks and kyotes comin down from the hills, and the freewaymen robbin us, but we are lucky because we have the Warmth and Stuff inside. After the fal de rol, isn't the Mall the winner of our disconnect?

William Kowinski

The shopping mall provides a necessary space. On one level, the mall is the product and producer of consumer culture, indoctrinating individuals in the consumptive logic of contemporary society. On another level, the mall is the product of the social practices of its users, facilitating social interaction in an era in which public spaces are increasingly scarce. Thus, the mall is an ambivalent setting, experienced through the tension between private and public, commerce and community. Teenagers have an especially ambivalent relationship with the setting, finding themselves represented as desirable and delinquent at one and the same time.
The thesis has explored the mall-as-place in order to grasp the many ways in which the structuring of space both promotes and constrains social interaction. Spatial practices and the representations of space in the mall are rooted in the imperative to purchase, but are incomplete without the kinetic energy of the crowd which accomplishes the requisite circulation of commodities. As consumers, then, teenagers participate in the (re)production of the mall as a strategically constructed place. At the same time, however, the constitutive nature of the crowd preserves the potential for tactical reinterpretations, for symbolic creativity, for negotiated and oppositional decodings.

John Urry has suggested that community may be understood as ideology, "where efforts are made to attach conceptions of communion to buildings, or areas, or estates, or cities and so on, in ways which conceal and help to perpetuate the non-communion relations actually found there." In an attempt to draw large crowds and promote social shopping, malls market themselves as community places, and often participate in programs such as "mall walking" to establish a positive reputation in the broader community. The mall’s representations of a community space, however, do not remain on the level of simulation. Through the social practices of its users, the mall is transformed into representational space, resulting in a real--albeit temporary--sense of communitas. Teenagers thus accomplish a sense of belonging and communion in the social space that they produce for themselves in the mall.

The mall-as-place attempts to control the movement of its patrons, but teenagers (like all patrons) are agents much more than they are cargo.
Hanging out comprises a range of activities, some more tactical and resistive than others, but central to all is the practice of movement, as a negotiation, subversion and/or perversion of the mall's regulations. In this way, shopping may become the tactical use of time; taking one's time to compare prices and products delays purchasing. Hanging out in the food court becomes a matter of timing; a well-timed walk around the mall eludes the label of loitering. Strolling through the corridors affords the individual time to appreciate the spectacle; the slowing of one's pace resists the flow of the mall. In short, the mall's spatial strategies seek to dominate time, but are everywhere interrupted by the teenagers' tactical use of time.

Teenagers may also tactically use the multitude of identities offered and attributed to them in the mall, playing on the multiple meanings of youth—as fun, as trouble—to resist a singular identity. The crowd may be used as a respite from the individual's identity, and as a disguise from the system of identification; or the crowd may be the means to revel in identity, to exaggerate and proclaim one's presence. The everyday creativity of teenagers in the mall is a practice of making do, of recombining and symbolically transforming the resources and commodities available to them in order to produce something new: an adolescent social space. In this lived space, the stratification of the mall space is reordered, and its functions distributed according to a different hierarchy. In the adolescent representational space, social interaction is placed above financial transaction, deferring and displacing the imperative to purchase. Rather than the "winner of our disconnect," the mall may be used
as a site in and by which to reconnect, to recuperate a sense of community, to establish a space of one’s own.

• a return to methodology •

While the conventional positivist concerns of external and internal validity may be somewhat inappropriate when applied to qualitative research, they raise important questions which should be addressed.\textsuperscript{4} First of all, there is the degree to which the research may be generalized, or transferred to other social situations. The research has attempted to understand the social processes underlying the adolescent activity of hanging out. As such, it seems likely that the findings are applicable to other North American cities in which there are malls. More importantly, I contend that these same social practices would be found in small towns or areas of cities in which there are no malls. In these situations, the venue for hanging out, and the obstacles and resources made available by that venue, may change, but the demand for a social space, away from explicit adult supervision, will remain. Likewise, the tactical practice of movement, which produces that social space, will be trans-situational as teenagers, regardless of the size of city in which they find themselves, must still contend with a lack of space that is not owned or controlled by adults. As such, the use of farmers’ fields for teenage parties may be considered analogous to the practice of nomadic squatters in the mall’s food court.

The second concern, internal validity, addresses the degree of accuracy in the collected data. Respondents may introduce distortions into the analysis through exaggeration or fabrication. However, it is here that the positivistic notion of validity falls short as it fails to appreciate the value of such
exaggerations. What teenagers lie about is often more instructive than the lie itself. That said, the agreement between disparate respondents suggests a high degree of internal validity. Responses from teenagers of different ages, areas and genders tended to fall into recurrent themes; the repetition of common opinions thus mediates the effect of aberrant responses. As well, the social practices identified by the respondents were corroborated through participant observation. What one must bear in mind, however, is that the strength of qualitative research lies in its attention to individual responses and exceptions.

- implications for future research and theoretical perspectives -

The research points to a number of possible directions for future research. Substantively, the work would benefit from the exploration of a number of factors. The mall places a large emphasis on the maintenance of a distraction-free environment. It would be instructive to interview other mall patrons, especially those the mall most wants to protect (namely, middle and upper class adult shoppers), to gauge the real, rather than the perceived, effect of the teenage presence--particularly group presence--on the setting and the social practices of others. Secondly, the gender and age related differences suggested in the data would be better developed with a larger sample that included a broader age range, and more proportionate number of male respondents.

While the research has focused on status rather than class, the role that class plays in the teenage use of the mall is another factor which deserves attention. Leisure activities involving sports teams and music lessons, for example, often are tied to prohibitive costs, and teenage participation in these
activities (whether as their own choice, or as the choice of parents who deem them “acceptable” leisure pursuits) may limit the time available, and mediate the interest in hanging out at the mall. Finally, the issue of race has been entirely absent in the research. Given the stereotypes associated with race and youth, and the perceived relationship between race and gangs, an examination of the role race plays in the use of malls would likely highlight a further level of stratification of youth, and of space.

There are a number of substantively-related avenues of research suggested by the findings. A study of mall rats, for example, lends itself to a subcultural analysis, as would the group of homeless youth who use the mall as both a hiding place and social venue. Moving beyond a specific focus on youth, the study invites comparisons between the practices examined here, and those of other regular mall patrons, such as retired elderly and the unemployed. As well, the relationship between mall employees and the setting is of interest. Teenagers who work at the mall still commonly identify the setting as a social space. With respect to adult mall employees, who likely do not hang out at the mall in their off-work hours, it would be interesting to explore their definitions of what the mall represents in terms of a social space, particularly if they are responsible for policing that space (as in the case of security guards).

Conceptually, the thesis has much to offer to the related theoretical perspectives on space and youth. By informing the work on space by the work on youth, and vice a versa, the thesis points to the necessity of taking space and its attending boundaries broadly, and to the possibility of grounding
theoretical work in an empirical study. By combining an attention to the specific status of youth with the recognition of the structuring of space, the research provides a starting point for further investigations into the ways in which youth use other sites, such as streets, schools, bedrooms, or (to overtly expand the notion of movement) cars. Related to the concern here for the dearth of public spaces, a deeper exploration of the meanings and definitions teenagers associate with “the public,” and their perceived place in the public body is of interest.

The relevance of the thesis, however, is not limited to the theoretical work on space and youth. The use of such concepts as leisure, stratification, resistance, indoctrination, tactics, agency and status links the research to a whole host of sociological concerns. For example, the tactical accomplishment of gaining and maintaining access is relevant to the study of any group which challenges the exclusionary practices of sites. The creative use of crowds and the practice of walking is a salient feature in other sites of circulation, such as airports, train stations and hotel lobbies. Inquiries into other transient social worlds, such as R.V. communities, rave parties and group backpacking may be informed by the concept of nomadic squatters. The teenage decoding, transformation and dismissal of stereotypes is applicable to other groups’ negotiations of classifications. The ambivalence and the varying degrees of resistance identified in the teenagers’ practices point to a more subtle analysis of the ways in which individuals interact with society’s dominant ideology. In general, the thesis raises broad questions concerning the ways in which
individuals define, shape, negotiate, transform, reproduce, resist, protect and contest space.

Fundamentally, the issue of the social production of space is sociologically pertinent to all studies of interaction, as social practices are made possible, constrained and located by specific junctures of time and space. The spatial structures containing social life are neither passive nor impenetrable. A recognition of the intersection of structural determinants and social practices upon which social life hinges is essential to an understanding of the complex practice of everyday life.

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1 Kowinski, *The Mailing of America*, 393-94.
4 See, for example, Chapter 5 "Defending the Value and Logic of Qualitative Research" in Marshall and Rossman *Designing Qualitative Research*, 144-53.
Bibliography


Appendix A

Interview Log and Respondent Code Numbers

**Interview Log for Teenage Respondents**

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Appendix B
Consent and Information Material

Two different informed consent documents were prepared. Teenage respondents were provided with a consent form to be signed by their parents (or by themselves if over the age of 18) and returned at the time of the interview. For their parents, they were also provided with an information sheet on the back of which was a copy of the consent form, which they retained for their own records. Merchants, security guards, administration and others were requested to sign a slightly different consent form, and were provided with a copy of the form for their own records. At the time of the interviews, the thesis title was *Teens in the Mall: Making Social Uses of Private Space*, which is reflected on the consent forms.
Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Jennifer Smith and I am a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at McMaster University, in the Master of Arts program. Currently, I am in the process of completing the research for my thesis, "Teens in the Mall: Making Social Uses of Private Space." I would like to take this opportunity to briefly outline the project for your information.

My thesis focuses on the shopping mall as a social environment, or community. I am interested in how teenagers, in particular, make use of this space. Shopping malls, as private, commercial spaces, present an interesting setting for social activities, including those that do not necessarily involve shopping, such as meeting friends, window shopping, hanging out, etc.

The occasional conflict between the private interests of the mall and the social interests of the public is a pressing issue that interests all of us, not just teenagers. I am interested in youth as an example of a population who are using non-traditional places as public areas. Public spaces—traditionally a city's streets, squares and parks—are becoming less and less welcoming or available due to crime, lack of municipal funds, or inaccessibility. The result is that people are turning to non-traditional spaces, such as shopping malls, as their public space.

The research for the thesis involves both group and one-on-one hour-long interviews between myself and participating teenagers. Participation is strictly voluntary and each participant is guaranteed anonymity and the right to withdraw at any point. The findings will be made available to all participants upon request. The research has been approved by the McMaster Ethics Committee.

Please read the form "Statement of Informed Consent" (a copy of which is on the reverse side of this letter for your records) and sign it if you are allowing your son or daughter to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me (308-7896) or my academic supervisor, Dr. Graham Knight (525-9140 x23606).

Your cooperation and time are very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Smith
Teens in the Mall: Making Social Uses of Private Space

Jennifer Smith (Masters Candidate)
Department of Sociology, McMaster University

Purpose: The main objective of the study is to investigate the shopping mall as a setting for social life, and in particular, the social uses teenagers make of the mall.

Procedure: The majority of the data for the study will be gathered though group and/or one-on-one interviews. The participant will be involved in a one hour interview session with the researcher. These interviews will be tape-recorded and later transcribed. Following the interview, the participant will fill out an anonymous “Background Information” questionnaire. This project adheres to the stipulations outlined by the President’s Committee on Ethics of Research on Human Subjects, a body within the University which reviews research projects involving the participation of people.

Confidentiality: The participant is guaranteed anonymity. Consent forms, interview transcripts, and questionnaires will be coded and no names will appear in the transcripts or in the final report. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Upon the completion of the project, interview transcripts and questionnaires will be destroyed and tape recordings will be erased.

Findings and Results: Findings will appear in a final report to be submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Sociology. This report will be made available to the participants upon request through the school’s guidance department. As well, the participant may request to view the transcript of his/her interview.

Participation: Participation in the study is completely voluntary. The participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any point and/or to refrain from answering any questions he/she prefers to omit.

Questions: If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please call Jennifer Smith at 308-7896.

CONSENT STATEMENT: I have read this sheet in its entirety. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project and have received a copy of the consent form. I acknowledge that the participant has the right to refuse to participate and can withdraw at any time.

• Parent/Guardian Consent: I consent to my son/daughter’s participation in this study.

Participant’s Name (please print): ___________________________ Date: __________

Parent/Guardian’s Signature: __________________________________________

• Participant Consent (if 18 years or older): I consent to participate in this study.

Participant’s Name (please print): ___________________________ Date: __________

Participant’s Signature: __________________________________________

Thank you for your time. Your participation is very much appreciated.
Teens in the Mall: Making Social Uses of Private Space

Jennifer Smith (Masters Candidate)  
Department of Sociology  
McMaster University

Purpose: The main objective of the study is to investigate the shopping mall as a setting for social life, and in particular, the social uses teenagers make of the mall.

Procedure: The majority of the data for the study will be gathered through one-on-one interviews. The participant will be involved in a one-hour session with the researcher. These interviews will be tape-recorded and later transcribed. This project adheres to the stipulations outlined by the President’s Committee on Ethics of Research on Human Subjects, a body within the University which reviews research projects involving the participation of people.

Confidentiality: The participant is guaranteed anonymity. Consent forms and interview transcripts will be coded and no names will appear in the transcripts or in the final report. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Upon the completion of the project, interview transcripts will be destroyed and tape recordings will be erased.

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Questions: If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please call Jennifer Smith at 308-7896.

CONSENT STATEMENT: I have read this sheet in its entirety. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project and have received a copy of the consent form. I acknowledge that I have the right to refuse to participate and can withdraw at any time.

I consent to participate in this study.

Participant’s Name (please print): ________________________________

Participant’s Signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Thank you for your time. Your participation is very much appreciated.
Appendix C

Ethics Approval Form

MCMASTER UNIVERSITY
HAMILTON, ONTARIO, CANADA

COMMITTEE ON
THE ETHICS OF RESEARCH ON HUMAN SUBJECTS

TO:  C. Knight ; S Smith

RE:  Master's Research

TITLE:  Teens in the Mail: Making Social Uses of Private Space

The above person has submitted an application to the Committee on Ethics of Research on Human Subjects.

The Committee has reviewed the application and finds that it meets our criteria of acceptability on ethical grounds. The review has been conducted with a view toward insuring that the rights and privacy of the subjects have been adequately protected; that the risks of the investigation do not outweigh the anticipated gain; and that informed consent will be appropriately obtained.

We concur in all necessary endorsements of the application.

Ian Begg

Date: July 11/96

For the Committee on the Ethics of Research on Human Subjects

C.K. Bart, Associate Professor, Business
I.M. Begg, Professor, Psychology (Chair)
E. Boetzkes, Assistant Professor, Philosophy
R.A. Brown, Associate Professor, School of Social Work
B. Donst, Ecumenical Chaplain, Chaplains' Office
T. Kroeker, Lecturer, Religious Studies
C. Lafreniere, Legal Consultant, Martin & Martin
R.J. Preston, Professor, Anthropology
C. Riech, Associate Professor, Kinesiology
J. Synge, Associate Professor, Sociology
M. Tarnapolsky, Kinesiology
S. Watt, Professor, Social Work