

A New Paradigm of Community: An Alternative Social Space known as The Mall of America

Amanda Jane Renneke

Abstract

My research topic focused on the social construction of community and its growing complexity throughout history. In particular, I have discovered through my research that there is a new paradigm which integrates the Mall of America as an example of an evolved community center. Society has evolved and grown more complex, and as a result so have perceptions of community. In this paper, I have selected 6 interviewees which I found to be the most useful to my analysis. I chose them because they represented different age groups, genders, and ethnicities. My primary finding of this research was that The Mall of America in particular, should be seen in a different light from other malls. My secondary finding, through my literature review, was about the social construction of community as actually being a significant factor in the creation of The Mall as community center.

The Setting

The Mall of America is located in Bloomington, Minnesota. It occupies over 4.2 million square feet, contains over 400 stores, and is equivalent to 88 football fields, of which only 41 are actually dedicated to retail stores (Appendix A). It is the second largest mall in the entire world, behind the Edmonton mall in Alberta, Canada. Its opening was 10 years ago this year. Its monstrosity and unique quality has brought curious tourists in from all over the world. Since it is conveniently close to the International Airport, there are shuttles to and from The Mall in order to provide safe and quick transportation. In addition, hotels are located nearby the Mall, allowing for a fun atmosphere in close proximity. Shuttles also go into downtown areas, catering to people living in the inner cities. Also, if one chooses to drive, parking is free and the lot spaces are virtually unlimited. Not only does The Mall provide for efficient transportation needs, but it is open everyday on the weekdays and Saturdays from 9:30am to 9:30pm, while the bars, restaurants, arcades, and theatres are open until 1am. These long hours allow people to come to the mall on weekends, weekdays, and weeknights.

The Mall of America not only houses 400 stores, but it also contains a large theme park, where families and groups can enjoy rides and sweets in a safe and virtually outside atmosphere (Appendix B). It also holds conventions, shows, and supports foundations, such as the American Cancer Society.

The younger generation can be seen in the arcades, Camp Snoopy, or wandering around in groups enjoying each other's company. On the other hand, it's common to see the older generation taking their daily or weekly long walks with old and new friends in a safe and socially simulating environment. In between these groups, there are strollers galore, and wide eyed toddlers racing little cars in Lego Land. College students also venture to the mall by bus, in groups or by themselves, to celebrate birthdays, meet new people, and get off campus for a while. The Mall as community center holds tons of people with tons of ways to spend their leisure time. And the slogan of the mall holds true when it states: "There's a place for fun in your life, Mall of America!"

The Problem

Originally, the problem I set out to study was the misconception of previous research about The Mall as the beginning of the end to the original town atmosphere or community. I was going to argue against these critics and use participants, literature, and my own perspective to support this idea. However, as my research progressed, it became apparent that the definition of community needed to be reevaluated. I argue that the social construction of community has changed. As a result, alternative social spaces, like The Mall of America, have created a new paradigm of community and it should be recognized. The Mall is actually the new community center of our time.

I am aware of that there are negative aspects to this community, just as there are negative aspects in every community (maybe that is why there has been room for new paradigms). Communities are not static. So why not recognize what type of atmosphere people are drawn to, and consider those places as communities of the 21st Century?

Literature and participant observation were two crucial factors in my research. I found that The Mall of America is more than a concrete consumerist ploy. People are drawn to it because of its social value. The social construction of community is always changing, and today, society has chosen to spend time in a mall that provides them with more than "retail therapy". They feel safe, exposed to a social atmosphere, and most importantly, like a part of an immense community, whether they know each other or not.

How Did the Social Category of Community Take Shape?

Community: 1.) A body of people having common organization or interests, or living in the same place under the same laws and regulations; as a community of monks. 2.) Society at large: a commonwealth or state; a body politic; the public, or people in general; —used with the definite article; as a town, village, or neighborhood, hence the region itself; as the proposed system will benefit

our community. 3.) Joint relationship or ownership, common possession or participation; as, a community of goods or of ideas. 4.) Common character; likeness. 5.) Social intercourse; society. 7.) Commonness; frequency.

This definition of community was written in 1934, and its many meanings indicate the open-endedness of where community could actually exist in various social spaces. In the pre-war days, however, things were a little different, in terms of the ways society found community. Community was deemed as a purely sociological concept, and the term “natural community” was established in order to restrict society’s boundaries and maintain order within villages, neighborhoods, and towns and even between races and classes of people.

The term natural community was apparently picked up and taken to mean a type of residential solidarity which was universal because it was uninfluenced by culture or administration (Suttles: 6).

Moreover, the idea of community at that time was basically undisputed. Historically, there were established rules and values for each community, but these rules and values also tended to be universal.

Before the war(s), people were accepting of those conditions because they were content with the way society treated them. Town centers, churches, homes, and meeting halls were the primary gathering places of communities. At that time, people, for the most part, felt safe outside with people who were of the same class and race. Since, other races and classes, for the most part, did not mingle together in a common space, people remained encapsulated within their heterogeneous spheres. The term “natural community” developed as a reaction to disputes about this lack of freedom to explore various facets of society. Sociologists struggled to conceptualize this category and Bernard Suttles argues that, as a result:

Many of the conflicting claims for or against the autonomy of residential groups could be dismissed as a value conflict were it not for the way in which factual and sociological accounts get drawn into fray. A large part of the confusion derives from the equivocal and partial accounts of sociologists who have framed questions and answers which have been dragged into policy statements whether or not the authors wished them there (7).

The original ideas about community demanded change because people began to question whether the natural community was legitimate and “uninfluenced by culture.”

The harmonious life of segregation and the overall boundaries which defined community, would soon come to an end. As the war days began, people

became more fearful of congregating in the town centers and outdoor public spaces. More people began to populate these areas in society and the increase in diversity culturally changed the dynamics of their spheres.

The Strategic Plan of Victor Gruen

Victor Gruen was “the designer of Southdale (coincidentally located in Edina, Minnesota), the world’s first fully enclosed shopping mall (Cohen: 1056).” During the post war days, people were uneasy about the changes within their communities, and the ambiguous nature of its meaning to them. The increased population and diversity of their cities and towns were a threat to their conventional ways. In reaction to this change, Gruen thought if they built a structure that mimicked the main street or acted as a community center, it would bring people together as a natural community once again. His idea was meant to cater to those in suburbia, he states:
By affording opportunities for a social life and recreation in a protected pedestrian environment, by incorporating civic and educational facilities, shopping centers can fill an existing void (Gruen in Cohen: 1056).

This article then goes on to say:

Not only did Gruen and others promote the construction of community centers in the atomized landscape of suburbia, but in appearance their earliest shopping centers idealized—almost romanticized—the physical plan of the traditional downtown shopping street, with stores lining both sides of an open-air pedestrian walkway that was landscaped and equipped with benches (Cohen: 1056).

Gruen’s idea was an altruistic one, but it ended up having a negative effect on the formulation of more diverse communities. Businessmen started to realize the potential of this niche market because “it encouraged social innovation while maximizing profit” (ibid). As a result, shopping malls reverted back to their safe and segregated realms.

Market segmentation was the central focus of this combination of commercial and civic activity, “as the shopping center sought perhaps contradictorily to legitimize itself as a true community center and to define that community in exclusionary socioeconomic and racial terms”(1059). Soon, people moved out of the inner city or the inner cores of the township community. This expansion resulted in segregated and homogenous scattered groups and an empty core. I think it is important to mention that the developers had a lot to do with this change. They had strategically placed growing businesses, like malls, outside of the city in order to suit the needs of those who had the means to go to such places. Moreover,

Three whites were moving out for every two non-whites who moved in to the inner city...In this way, suburbanization must be seen as a new form of racial segregation in the face of a huge wave of African-American migration from the South to the North during the 1950's (ibid).'

What makes the Mall of America so special?

The Mall of America is not just any mall; it contains a college, a wedding chapel, an amusement park, and various other small communities within communities. As mentioned earlier, I contend that the Mall is distinct from any other malls. One author who wrote about the Mall agrees:

It's the nonretail stuff that makes the MOA the MOA and redefines mall-going. Take Camp Snoopy, the mall's centerpiece. It has a mere seven stores, but it has ten eateries, five "attractions", four shows, and sixteen rides. What's shopping got to do with it? (Sullivan: 1)

Another author also states:

People are confusing their mall with other malls, "when people hear that we are getting the biggest mall, they go, 'oh yuck'...but this is not like other malls. This is the next level of retailing. It's like the difference between a space station and a bus station (Wilkerson: A14)."

To cite examples of other malls in the surrounding area, the ancient Southdale Mall, Ridgedale Mall, Roseville Mall, and Burnsville Mall all consist of mere retail stores, food courts, and drink stands; the MOA subscribes to a new ideal, an idealistic community center. The Mall of America juxtaposes the old communalistic idea of malls (Gruen) with new ones. This presents society with a new paradigm within the category of community. In this paradigm the focus is on society's value on leisure time or their "third place." The Mall of America is a third place. Some critics, like Robert Putnam and Ray Oldenburg argue that this is one of the reasons for our decrease in the appreciation of "social capital" and main streets. Putnam however was more concerned with TV watching and commuting. And Oldenburg, well...he was OLDenburg. Is it possible that a Mall such as the MOA actually brings people together and increases social capital as well as replacing the main streets? Absolutely.

The Methodology

In the beginning weeks of my research I wanted to get a feel for the area. In order to do this, I observed and wrote down as many things as I could, from the environment to the walking pace of the mall goers. At the time of my observation, I was not sure what was going to be the focus of my research. I brainstormed about the most interesting aspects of the mall. I meandered

through the arcades, Camp Snoopy, looked at the ways retail stores catered to women differently than men, and I even did a little participant observation with my mother. I was struggling to find the focus of my research in this Mall. Then it hit me, literally: a cute, little, electronic, furry, pink pig had managed to escape from the store, and run right into my foot. “Oink! Oink! Oink!” It said, and I smiled with delight. I picked up the pig and put it back with the other pigs. I stared at all those identical electronic farm animals, and a light bulb went off in my head. These little piggies were metaphors for all of those malls that are more or less identical. The Mall of America is different from all the other little malls. Obviously, it is different because it is the largest mall in the US, but it’s more than that. It is a symbol of change in what was once merely consumerism at its best.

Once my research topic became clear, I continued to observe, and attempted to piece together why this mall was different. I did this through research on the social category of community as well as the ways its social dynamics have changed. I also conducted interviews which were the key element to my conclusion about a new paradigm.

The strengths of my research, were in the interviews and personal accounts about the way the Mall is much more than a place to shop. My research on the theory of community and the historical origin of malls was also a strong aspect of my research. I feel this way because I think it is important for people to realize that the idea behind the mall originated because of the need for social interaction. It mimicked the town center, but also brought along the benefits of climate control, safety, as well as possibilities for innovative specialty stores. After I finished my research, and put everything together to write the actual paper, I discovered that my research was of a macro level scale. I believe this is a weakness to the paper, because it universalizes the opinions all people, when a minute amount of people were actually interviewed. Another weakness to this paper is its positivistic approach. It only focuses on the idealized qualities and not the big picture. By this I mean, the strategic location of the Mall reinforces urban sprawl, which has been detrimental to the development of the inner cities and promoted individualism. I also contend this mall, like all other malls, continues to reinforce the desire for people consume, consume and consume!

Findings

This section begins with my brief observations pertaining to the Mall. After my personal findings, the next part will focus on summaries of the interviewees. I have chosen to write about 6 interviewees. By the end of my research, I had compiled almost 30 casual interviews of mall-goers; I selected 6 of the most inquisitive individuals, because I believe their contributions tied into my topic of community the best. Out of the 6, 3 were female and 3 male, 1 white, 1 black

and 1 Vietnamese. The men interviewed consisted of 1 white, 1 black, and 1 Hispanic. These summaries will be formatted as short stories, mostly for the sake of stressing informal social interaction within the community of the mall, and partly because of its entertainment value.

Before undergoing my research, I hardly ever went to the mall because I had stereotyped it as any other mall. Sure, there are several parallels to the Mall of America and places like the Southdale Mall. However, as I mentioned earlier in this paper, there is something different about this Mall. I realized this through my observation and comparison of other malls I had been to. I am aware that making comparisons about other malls could be useful for further research; however, this is not the focus of my analyses. Furthermore, I realized several things about the nature of people within this new paradigm of community. First of all, I think there is a high comfort level within the Mall. Toddlers are pushing their own strollers. The younger and older kids are always occupied by the vast amount of entertainment in the arcades, with friends they had brought along, and with their family. All people young and old walk at a nonchalant pace. They are comfortable with their surroundings, and most importantly, they are comfortable and happy to be around other people.

The other significant factor that separates this mall, that makes it a new type of community center, is that it is always packed. And based on my observation, most people were not carrying huge shopping bags, because that was not the real reason that they chose to go there. This place is an icon for all Americans not only because it is huge, but because it is a reflection of what most of them want in an ideal community.

“Raul”

I strolled down the walkway, with my pen and bright red composition book, looking for my first interviewee. I made up my mind that I wanted to look for someone who was about the same age as me because I thought it would have been a good way to ease into this interview process. Soon I spotted my first victim. I scoped him out from a nearby perfume shop (someone did some serious smell testing that day). He was a thin young man, about 5 foot 10 inches or so, and he just sat there on a bench. He appeared to be looking at a plethora of tan, blonde bikini models. I approached him, to his surprise, and he sat up from his gazing slouch.

“Hello!” I said, and took a seat next to him on the bench.

“Hi,” he replied.

He looked at me, but then continued to stare at the luscious bosoms in the window.

“So, how’s it going...what do you think of the mall...pretty big huh?” I began to feel nervous and regretted even talking to him. Finally he said,

“I do not speak a English very well.”

At first I thought, now I have gotten myself into a bind, but then I thought about it and realized that it was really too late. I began speaking in Spanish, and soon I was engrossed in conversation about his perceptions of the mall. I am going to briefly summarize what he thought of the mall, since he was speaking in Spanish, I got the main points, but I was unable to make a direct translation. Raul works in the Jamba Juice Bar on the upper level of the mall. He was not working or on his break when I spoke with him, this was where he chose to spend his leisure time. Raul is originally from Ecuador and has been living in Minnesota for five months. Raul came here for job opportunities. He considered the mall as more than just a building full of retail stores. He thought it was a symbol of US society. He says there is a lot of diversity and opportunities for immigrants like him. Raul talked about his home in Ecuador, and he said the people were “muy pobre” (poor) and “la vida es muy baja” (low standard of living). He also said that in his homeland it is “peligroso” or dangerous. In contrast, he feels spaces like the mall allow him a safe and entertaining place to feel socially included into American life and community. He said he loves to spend his leisure time here because he enjoys being around people of all cultures in a safe, clean environment. He also says that it has helped him understand and begin to learn the English language. When I asked him what he did not like about the mall, he said “nada” or nothing. Overall, for Raul, he would not go to just any mall as his third place, but he would go to the Mall of America. And even though he works there, he considers this place to be a type of idealized community. I think Raul is a great example of a person who does not take the community center called the Mall for granted. He is very poor, and he cannot go and make tons of purchases in the Mall. He goes there because of what else is in the Mall. He sits on the benches because he feels a part of a community of Americans who have, by some unforeseen circumstance, been drawn together to occupy this social space.

“Bill” and his 3-week old baby boy named “Timmy”

Bill is a white male in his fifties. He is on his second marriage, and Timmy is the first and only child in his second marriage. He has a total of five children (ages from 3 months to about 30 years) and two grandchildren. Bill is from Milwaukee, Wisconsin and this was his first time in the Mall. His wife and mother were off shopping for a baptism outfit. Bill...well, he wanted to enjoy all of those other fun and unique aspects of the Mall. I asked Bill if he liked to shop, and he said “heck no! I just like to watch people and relax...” He paused briefly and then said, “...I also like to show off lil’ Timmy too.” Soon I dove into the questions I had hoped to have answered. I began by asking

him what makes this mall different from the others, and he said first of all, “cause it is just so big,” and then he went on to suggest that it is not just a Mall, but it is an amusement park, Lego land, it has tons of places to eat, bars, movie theaters, and he went on to show me the map of all the different things people can do and see. He was rather excited about it actually, because malls, in general have never appealed to him in the past.

I asked him about safety issues and whether or not he had any reservations about the dangers of being in a public space (I made reference to the tragedy of 9/11), and he stopped and thought about that question for a few seconds. It seemed like a sensitive issue for him, but then he spoke:

“I think tragedies like that should encourage us to be more interactive with people, whether we know them or not. I think the Mall is a place people should go and just hang out with friends and family...maybe even meet nice pretty strangers like you!”

I graciously chuckled, and felt slightly flattered and uncomfortable at the same time.

By then, Timmy had begun to scream and Bill became rather anxious. He tried to feed him, but by then he was so worked up, it was clear he did not want the bottle. Eventually Bill offered me the wailing baby. I scooped him up, put him on my shoulder, and started patting him on the back.

“Burp!”

That was all he needed. I gave the baby back to Bill and he thanked me for my burping services. There was a brief pause in the conversation, and then I asked him what he disliked about the Mall. He replied:

“It is so big, that it takes such a long time to get around it. I wish I had a golf cart or something like that.”

Was that just American laziness at its best? Actually, I do see his point: the mall is enormous as everyone knows, and this does make it hard to get to all the attractions in one day.

Overall, my interview with Bill was rather unique. I thought his comments were enlightening and moreover, I thought he brought up some key issues about how society should act in reaction to 9/11. It is my contention that, Bill enjoyed what the mall had to offer in terms of social value. He also made some good points about how the US should join together in malls as rebellion against terrorists and, moreover, as a way of promoting social interaction within this large community.

“Nancy,” Mrs. Mall Security

Nancy has been working as a security officer for the Mall of America for

almost three years. She is married with no children or desire to have children. She is white and lives in the Minneapolis area. Since Nancy was working during the interview, our time was limited. Although I do not have tons of information on her perspective on the Mall as community center, I do have some insight I deemed beneficial to my research. I consider this information useful because Nancy sees what goes on in the Mall on a daily basis.

I began the interview by asking her what makes the mall so special (Appendix D). She basically said that it is everything for anyone who can actually afford to come here and most people just want to shop. More or less she is confirming my argument about the ethical and social dangers of urban sprawl. She is also universalizing this mall as the same as any other mall because it is about shop-and-go. I disagreed with her, but I did not tell her so.

On the other hand, when I asked her what she liked about her job at the Mall, she stated:

“This is a generally safe place. People who come here, for the most part, are not looking for trouble...seems people come here to get out of the house, shop and maybe get a nice dinner...I spend so much time in here, I don't even notice the shops and stuff...one thing I do notice though, is that for all the millions of people who come here, I come home maybe once a week or every other week with an exciting story to tell my husband.”

These statements were indicative of the pleasant nature of the mall. Even Nancy, who performs her job at the Mall, asserts that this community center is a harmonious one. Even more importantly, she recognizes the unusually safe nature of this place and oftentimes she ends up being bored, looking for someone to bust.

“Annie”

Annie is a Vietnamese American. She is 22, and has lived in America all her life. She is currently attending American University. I chose to write about her, because the college she attends is, interestingly enough, inside the mall.

Originally when I had approached her, I asked her where I could find the wedding chapel. I knew it was around that area because I looked it up in the directory, but I am terrible with directions. She said she thought it was on the other side of the mall, but she was not sure, because she does not come here to shop. I was rather dumbfounded by her response, and decided ask her if she would mind if I asked her a few questions. She hesitantly said “sure, I guess.” She did not seem that interested. I assumed she was annoyed because she had been asked that question from someone else that wanted to conduct a generic survey.

I gave her the spiel and began to look through my bag for my interview

questions. I could tell she was still uninterested because she began looking around for an excuse to leave, so I did not bother getting out the questions. I just tried to focus on asking her what she was doing there if she was not shopping “I am taking some classes at the University, cause it’s cheap.” She said.

I had never actually met someone who went to the University . She described her experience there as a positive one. To briefly summarize, she thought this mall was different from other malls because it contained an educational institution. Since she lives in the city, she also thinks it is a convenient commute. There is free parking, easy access to food, and she considers her college as a great place to meet people with similar interests. Overall, even though she does not participate in the shopping experience, she has managed to find community within the larger community center.

“Rosemary” and “Rali” (tape-recorded interview)

This retired couple, both African American, drove from Michigan to meet up with family members. This was their first experience in the mall. Rosemary thought the mall was “really something else.” Rali on the other hand, replied, “I’m just the driver.” I started out the interview process by discussing what I was doing in the mall. At first they were reluctant to talk with me, but I reassured them I was a student doing a research project and would appreciate some of their time. They complied with delight. I decided not to whip out my interview sheet, because by then I had the questions memorized, and did not see the need in making the interview “official.”

“So what is the most appealing aspect of the mall?” I asked. They thought about it for awhile, and Rali stated:

“They have some nice big parking spaces.”

Rosemary looked at Rali and rolled her eyes.

“What you talking about, she is not talking about the parkin’ lot, you old man!”

I laughed and he shrugged her off. Rosemary then began to explain what she thought was the best thing about being there:

“It is a good place for my family to come and have a good time together... this a fun place. Oh, and they also got a hotel right around the block...we are staying there because it is close by and then Rali don’t have to get us killed in traffic...he can’t see nothing anymore.”

Rali was in a daze. He had a content smile on his face as he watched his grandchildren shop at the store in front of the benches.

“...can’t hear me when I make fun of him, neither.” As Rosemary chuckled her whole body began to bounce up and down.

Rali tuned back into our conversation and realized his wife was talking about

him.

“Whatchyou talkin ‘bout, don’t listen to her, she crazy! So what else you wanna ask ME?”

I continued on with the interview and asked them what they thought was unique or different about this mall compared the ones in, say, Michigan perhaps:

“Shoot, this mall is so big, and this is my first time being here...well...I think they got some great things for kids and families...seen a lot of families here with their babies...I heard they got some arcades too...of course I like to shop...”

Rosemary paused and Rali started speaking loudly into the tape recorder:

“I DON’T CARE ABOUT SHOPPING, I just do what I am told...I sure do like watchin’ people go about their business, but I ain’t too fond of malls.”

Rali began talking to himself, like he was trying to formulate a sentence.

“This mall is like a lot of other malls, ‘cept it’s bigger...”

Rosemary gave Rali a puzzling look and said:

“It ain’t like no other malls in the US, you old fool. Honey, this mall is happenin’ because it has other stuff that makes it...well...The Mall of America. You know, they got rides and bars...” Then Rali interrupted,

“...And Hooters”

Rosemary looked as if she could blow smoke out her nose and ears.

“You nothin’ but a big ol’ pig!”

She rolled her eyes. By this time she was not happy with Rali, and it sort of resulted in the end of the interview. Soon, two of their grandchildren, a boy and a girl were done shopping in that area and wanted to show them Camp Snoopy. They noticed I was talking to their grandparents, and the girl looked rather impatient. The boy, who appeared to be around the age of fourteen or fifteen, didn’t seem to notice that I was interacting with his grandparents.

“Yo, G-pa did you see that girl...no...not that one...THAT one, well anyways, I just met her and we were talking and I think she digs me, damn!”

Rali slowly rose from the bench and put his arm around his grandson.

“Don’t be swarin’ in front of the ladies!”

By then I had also stood up and began putting my tape recorder away. I thanked them for their time and wished them well on their trip back to Michigan.

Each of these interviews suggested the Mall of America is what Rosemary considers “something else.” For some reason or another, people feel like they are a part of this larger community. It is not even necessary for people to be Americans in order to experience this social place as an ideal community. Raul made it clear that what the Mall represented was American society’s ideal “third place.” Bill’s story was worthy of noting mostly because he is not a

shopper, yet sees value in the other aspects of the mall. Nancy's perceptions of the Mall were interesting because of her view of the Mall's unusually safe nature. Annie, who did not appear to be fond of the Mall, was still able to find community within the community center because of her college. I think my interview with Rosemary and Rali is valuable because they are from an older generation, and yet seem to be aware of the 'other things' besides retail stores. I consider the social interaction and informal encounters of people as the most vital aspect of my findings. I also suggest that the Mall allows for more interaction because of its safe and pleasant atmosphere.

Conclusion

The most enlightening results of this research were based on my non-participatory observations. Moreover, I was also a "people watcher." In terms of my interviews, I discovered that people recognize the mall is a place to shop, but it is more than that. As the meanings we attach to community in the social world grow more complex and evolve, so too do the needs of individuals in these social spaces. The mall represents the new paradigm of community. People choose to spend their leisure time in social spaces like the mall because it brings them a sense of community.

The idealistic community they desire to be a part of, is more than a mall because it represents what people want in a community. Together, in both analyses on the origin of malls and my interviews, I have found that the Mall represents the small town layout that Gruen originally proposed. The Mall is an extension of other malls thus allowing for it to promote a sense of community and more over inclusion of all types of people around the world. It is a community center that brings people of all ages, racial backgrounds, and classes. It does not segregate people but it accommodates all interests of people. I interviewees were important to my conclusion because they represented different races, ages, and possibly classes. Moreover, their answers indicated the importance of the malls' distinctive nature. It appealed to them because it allowed them to do all the same things in a small town atmosphere, while promoting a safe, clean, appealing place to just be there, not as a consumer, but as a social being,

This research project could potentially be used in analyzing the ways community has changed throughout time. It offers a general idea that certain social places like the Mall promote the values of the community. Indirectly, it was people who have constructed this and allowed in to get as far as it has. And as people criticize those changes, they must realize they also took part in this change whether they know it or not.

I think this study could undergo further research through an in depth comparison of other malls in Minnesota as well as throughout the world. If I

could go back again, I would have narrowed my search, but it did not work out that way. I also wish I would have had more time to interview workers within the mall and their perspectives of what the mall does for the community of Minnesota.

Bibliography

Cohen, Elizabeth

1996 "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America." *The American Historical Review*. October: Volume 101, Issue 4, 1050-1081.

Jackson, Kenneth

1996. "All the World's a Mall: Reflections on the Social and Economic Consequences of the American Shopping Center". *The American Historical Review*. October: Volume 101, Issue 4, 1111-1121.

Karlen, Neal

1992 "The Mall That Ate Minnesota". *New York Times*. August 30: 5.

Oldenburg, Ray

1989 *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through The day*. Paragon House, New York.

Suttles, Gerald

1972 *The Social Construction of Communities*. University of Chicago Press.
Ronald Warren and Larry Lyon 1983 *New Perspectives on the American Community*. Dorsey Press.

Sullivan, Robert

1994 "...Or You Can Shop!" *Life*. April: v17 n4 p 94-92

Wilkerson, Isabel

1989 "Megamall, a New Fix for Future Shopping Addicts." *The New York Times*. Friday, June 9: A14.

<http://www.moa.com>