
Public relations, private security: managing youth and race at the Mall of America

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Abstract. In this paper, I examine the weekend night curfew imposed on youth under 16 years of age at the Mall of America (MOA). The discussion is based on qualitative research including twenty-six weekend observations of the curfew enforcement, interviews with security of color subcontracted by mall management to enforce the curfew, and media analysis of public relations efforts concerning disturbances and lawsuits involving security guards and youth of color at the mall. I argue that MOA security measures are closely linked with public relations (PR) and that a central function of PR as a support for security is to veil the racial dynamics motivating management policies at the mall. Key illustrations of the PR–security links and aims are seen in the campaign to ‘sell’ the curfew, which displaced issues of racial and generational inequalities onto moralizing discourses of property, safety, and family values, and in the deployment of security of color to accomplish friendly exclusions and managed inclusions of youth.

Introduction

On a Saturday night of fall 2000, a little after 7 pm, I followed a Mall of America (MOA) security officer (white shirt, blue trousers) and a Bloomington police officer as they headed past an American Security Corps guard (grey shirt, blue trousers) across the street to the parking ramp and went down a flight to the transit station located on the lower level of the east entrance. They joined two Dedicated Dads (green sweatshirts), four other mall security guards, and a mobile mall patrol officer (yellow and black windbreaker). The policeman and one guard entered the men's restroom, then reemerged moments later, the former leading a frightened African-American boy by the arm through a “no admittance” door. Under five foot tall, he was surely not yet a teenager. What I had just seen enforced was the mall's youth curfew policy. Implemented in 1996, four years after the mall opening, the curfew required children under 16 years of age to be accompanied by an adult (21 years or more) after 6 pm on Friday and Saturday nights. This policy is in vigor at the time of writing.

By all appearances, the MOA welcomes children. Nothing could announce this more than Camp Snoopy, the seven-acre amusement park that occupies the center of this massive rectangular enclosure. At regular intervals, one can see from the walkways the ferris wheel, the (slow) roller coaster train, and big plastic Snoopy; one can smell mini donuts and caramel corn; and one can hear the din of voices and machines. More importantly, here mall attractions have always extended to older youth as well as younger kids: there are the video arcades (many in Camp Snoopy), large sports and music stores, all-age game stores, numerous fast food areas, and clothing stores. Celebrated as a global attraction, two thirds of the visitors to the MOA are locals; of these visitors, youth became a major force. Upon opening in August 1992 the MOA became the hang-out for local teens, the place to meet their friends, see kids from rival schools, from across town. And it was easy to do so. Despite its suburban location in Bloomington, Minnesota, USA, the MOA is unusually accessible; buses from all parts of the Minneapolis–St. Paul metropolitan region (population 2.9 million) go there. During off-peak hours, school-aged kids could initially get there for a quarter.

Thus, the MOA was not created to be off limits to kids of any age. Nor would that have been profitable, when one considers, first, that by 1990, as the MOA was being constructed, children in the USA were estimated to represent \$90 billion annually in direct sales (Brazil, 1999) and, second, that over the last decade people of color were 'discovered' as 'hot' 'new' markets (Dávila, 2001; Halter, 2000; but see Austin, 1994; Chin, 2001).

At the same time, mall management has long believed (see, for example, Institute of Real Estate Management, 1983, page 183) that to attract shoppers requires a perception that the mall is safe; security therefore constitutes one 'bottom line' at shopping centers. Megamall interests in controlling their theme park + shopping center + downtown entertainment district against unruly youth seem straightforward. Yet, at a site where developers invested \$625 million (*Star Tribune* 9 July 1992), to exclude not just individual youth but the entire class must necessarily have been a high-stakes decision, one directing our attention to how the mall came to implement the curfew.

An early misencounter with the mall's Chief of Security (consequent to my witnessing the incident detailed above) led to my inability to gain permission from the public relations (PR) spokesperson to interview security guards. Security, who had to that time spoken to me with little hesitation, stopped altogether, as clearly they had been told to do. This fieldwork block proved fateful and fortuitous. I had stumbled onto what came to be, for me, a pivotal understanding: at the MOA security operates in sync with PR.

The large literature on privatization of public space and contemporary governmentality directs our attention to the use of state-of-the-art surveillance measures, transforming public spaces into quasi-private ones and related deployment of private security to regulate publics (see, for example, Boddy, 1992; Caldeira, 2000; Christopherson, 1994; Davis, 1990; 1998; Dean, 1999; Ellin, 1997a; 1997b; Foucault, 1989; Hannigan, 1998; Jackson, 1998; Koskela, 2000; Nunn, 2001; Rose, 1999; Smith, 1992; Sorkin, 1992a; Zukin, 1995), including in shopping centers (Chin, 2001; Crawford, 1992; Flusty, 1997; Goss, 1993; Lewis, 1990; Shields, 1989; 1997; Sibley, 1995; White, 1997; Williams et al, 2001). Contemporary privatized spaces aim for the "reduction of opportunities for disorder" and the regulation of "categories of people" (Shearing and Stenning, 1985, page 340), or risk management, rather than crime investigation (O'Malley, 1992; Shearing, 1992; Shearing and Stenning, 1985; Valverde and Cirak, 2003). I wish here to build on these analyses first to make the point that PR is thoroughly implicated in surveillance and security measures directed at diverse publics at the MOA. This paper shows that at one and the same time, PR is an arm of security and security is a form of PR.

This connection has been addressed chiefly with respect to Disney. Disney offers an exemplary model of/for corporate spaces in which controls are *embedded* (Shearing and Stenning, 1985; Zukin, 1990) in the built environment, in technologies of surveillance, and in private security. At Disney, security guards conduct surveillance of the public (and of other employees, see Project on Disney, 1995, page 124; also Fjellman, 1992) in Disney costume or by posing as tourists or shoppers. For Zukin, among others, "learning from Disney" is to see how privatized spaces similarly "make social diversity less threatening and public space more secure" (1995, page 52)—with means that erode public culture and democratic process.

With the large amusement park, the MOA prompts direct comparisons with Disney. (The MOA itself draws comparisons: it boasts receiving more visitors than Walt Disney World.) What is most interesting for my purposes is precisely how the MOA makes 'diversity less threatening' through its PR/security guards. The PR-security connections at shopping centers have been overlooked except briefly by

two mall analysts. Kowinski noted the following parenthetically, in one of his lucid discussions of US shopping centers: “(Public relations is still a major function of mall security)” (1985, page 362). More recently, White’s analysis of ways youth in Australia are being regulated in public spaces also pointed to a newly developing practice at malls of “selling ‘security’ to parents and young people” (1997, page 32) as a way for mall management to balance concerns to draw customers who will spend by ensuring safety. It is the link between PR and security that structures the relationship of the mall with youth, as with other publics (Shields, 1992a). In the process, the mall’s PR–security combination structures social life, community relations, and political culture. Whether malls are ‘quasi’, ‘de facto’, or merely ‘pseudo’ public spaces (Featherstone, 1998; Fiske, 1989; Jackson, 1998; Langman, 1992; Shields, 1992b; Zukin, 1995), through the private authorities that govern them, social responsibility gives way to private security (O’Malley, 1992). It follows that public relations would stand in for democratic process.

My first aim in demonstrating a symbiotic relationship exists between PR and security that served to implement a curfew policy is thus to offer a case study in contemporary trends in governmentality (Burchell et al, 1991; Dean, 1999; Foucault, 1989; Rose, 1999). The agents, events, and context surrounding the imposition of the curfew also demand analysis of how race enters into mall strategies to manage diverse youth. It is evident that the MOA did not invent racialist subjectivities or phobia against youth, but rather in the space ostensibly welcoming all, the racial and generational dynamics of the wider society inevitably entered. Mall management practices and policies governing the ways diverse publics interrelate, or avoid doing so, contribute to the ongoing construction of race as well as generation, and related subjectivities. What the linked PR–security practices suggest, and this is my main point, is that the central and possibly most important function of PR as a support for security in its dealings with youth is to veil the racial dynamics motivating management policies at the mall.

Despite the mall’s continual claims of ‘color blindness’, race figures centrally in PR and security practices. This is revealed most overtly in discriminatory exclusions and counter lawsuits prior to the curfew, as I discuss in the first section. The curfew policy itself, I go on to discuss in the following section, was crafted in part to avoid confrontations over the constitutional protections accorded to historically discriminated-against groups and individuals. Notably, youth are not accorded the United States courts’ higher scrutiny to ensure equal protection to their freedoms, as are those groups protected through the 14th Amendment. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind the broader social and legal conditions and contexts that made this exclusion acceptable—not to local youth, but to local adults. However, far from acknowledging that racial conflicts compound and complicate the generational tensions at the mall, much less the racial issues prompting the curfew decision, the MOA public relations team ‘sells’ the class-wide exclusion of youth as if motivated by a sense of community, and manages inclusions and exclusions, particularly of youth of color, through a security corps of fictive kin.

The fact that security forces at the MOA are variously embodied and have titles drawn from kinship as well as military idioms calls upon us to consider more fully the forms and functions of the men and women guards themselves, and brings me to my main finding on mall strategies of blending PR and security. Race figures centrally at this mall in the ways the MOA simultaneously controls diversity and messages about it. As I discuss in the final section, possibly the most effective strategy to ensure acceptance of the fairness of the curfew has been in the mall’s deployment of security. In conjunction with the legal class-wide exclusionary policy allowing factual

denial of the racial dynamics at work in this space, mall management created a special security corps of color, the Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads. Officially, these plainclothed, uniformly dressed community liaison officers mediate between security and youth over the MOA "house code of conduct". In practice, the Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads' central function is to accomplish the exclusions and manage the inclusions of youth. Thus while denying the charges of racially motivated security policies with tirelessly repeated statements of color blindness, the mall also used the opposite tack; it is not color blind at all in its deployment of security of color. In a clever stroke of essentialism, the mall, through its combination of PR and security, meets color with color, effectively warding off legal conflicts and injuries to reputation.

Although security at the MOA is impressive in its technologies, these features are quantitatively but not qualitatively different from other large mall spaces. Nor is the youth curfew novel: the MOA followed other US shopping centers in implementing one. In many respects this is just another example of adults objecting to kids hanging out by stores. What this brief history of the MOA curfew offers is a direct means to examine the racialized processes structured into a space open to the public conditionally, that is to say, a vast private space in which diverse publics can be excluded, and their inclusion managed through the logics of marketing and security.

To demonstrate the links between MOA PR and security and their veiled management of racial dynamics, in what follows I analyze the relationship of the MOA to youth through the short history of the curfew. I base my discussion on a media review, interviews, and field observations. The first section concerns the 'prehistory' of the curfew (1992–96), where it was not only evident, but legally proven, that the mall was biased in its exclusions of youth of color. The second section concerns the PR campaign (from June to October 1996) during which marketing methods were employed to 'sell' the idea of the curfew to local parents, through the kind of pseudo-democratic process produced by PR, which in a sense turned bad press into PR for the curfew. These two sections are based on a comprehensive and critical review of media coverage where any combination of MOA, youth, security and/or crime arose in the two major local newspapers [Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* (*ST*) and the St. Paul *Pioneer Press* (*PP*)], from 1990 (two years before the mall opened) through 2000, as well as events prompting national media attention. By far, the curfew produced the most protracted local media attention and greatest national interest (over 100 articles). The third section considers the social and legal context of support for the curfew. The final section focuses on Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads. I draw both from interviews with those who originated this corps of fictive kin and from my fieldwork observations conducted during twenty consecutive weekend evenings (over 100 hours) in the fall of 2000 on the implementation of the curfew policy, and six subsequent visits. My usual routine was to check the deployment of the various security corps (unofficially described by apparent race or ethnicity) at the start of the curfew and once again to observe curfew implementation at the twenty-three mall entrances. I also made frequent trips to the transit station and east food court, the one favored by youth. Besides these rounds, I would talk to youth at the food court and salespeople.⁽¹⁾ This effort resulted in key findings that address my questions about the embodiment and performances (Mahtani, 2002) of racialized security.

⁽¹⁾ Fieldwork extended to conversations with youth, parents, and employees; however, discussion of that research is outside the scope of this paper. Analysis of the news media per se is curtailed by page restrictions.

Prehistory of the curfew: PR crises over security problems concerning youth

The first crisis management in reaction to actual crime involving youth occurred six months after the mall opened. According to police cited in the media, a conflict among youth in Camp Snoopy occurred after a group of four males demanded that a 13-year-old give them his “san José sharks starter jacket” (*ST* 9 February 1993). One, later identified as a 20-year-old gang member, shot a handgun wounding the 13-year-old, his brother, and a mall employee. The PR firm contracted by the mall after this incident clearly adopted a textbook approach (see Henard, 2002, page 10; Howard, 2002, page 18; Stanton, 2002) to crisis management communications: acknowledge the issue, state what is being done to address it, and counter the well-researched ‘negative bias’, that is, the tendency for publics to dwell on negative publicity more than other news, by placing it in a perspective that diminishes rather than heightens concern. Thus the mall PR coordinator called the crime “an isolated deal”, said “security reacted real well” (*ST* 9 February 1993), *and* announced it would increase its own security at the mall and that the city of Bloomington would add more police. Similarly, another article reported that “[the] public relations coordinator for the mall said the fact that there has been only one serious violent incident after more than 16 million people have visited the mall is a signal that it is secure” (*ST* 26 February 1993).

A second crisis concerned shoppers’ perception of safety; it produced a similar set of issues and responses. In late 1994 a family visiting on a Friday night from the agricultural town of Farmington, MN claimed to have been attacked by a group of ten youths at one of the mall’s two food courts. One family member said the youth “all had red scarves on, like they were in a gang” (*PP* 8 November 1994). The mall general manager’s comment was felicitous: he called it a “freak occurrence”, while fortifying this reassurance by saying that the mall would boost security on Friday nights (*PP* 10 November 1994). Like the mall spokesperson, the police presented a less worrisome perspective. They denied gang activity and noted that “every time we have an incident like this, there’s always this comment, especially if we have more than a few kids involved.” The Bloomington Chief of Police called the mall’s security “top notch”.

It is noteworthy that voices from outside the mall, namely authorities on crime and, in particular, the Bloomington Chief of Police, regularly offered what appears to have been better mall PR than mall staff, as these sources would seem to be more objective and reliable [if not disinterested, for indeed police have their own PR concerns (see Magnuson-Martinson 1998)]. More important, mention of race is the exception in reports of these crises,⁽²⁾ but as the next article revealed, it is understood to be a factor. During a “tension filled meeting” (*ST* 10 February 1993) after the Camp Snoopy incident, the mall general manager denied a tenant’s request to exclude “people like them”, in the process raising race to the explicit level: “‘Like them’. I guess we know you are saying black or minority”, said the manager. The Bloomington police chief “bristles” when tenants ask about African-American youths and gangs: “Just because somebody rounds a corner at Camp Snoopy and sees four or five black kids standing there they think it’s a gang.” The mall manager concurs that “gang has become a word used as a judgment of black youth.”

A few months after the disturbance to the out-of-town visitors, mall PR announced that its forty guest representatives (with concierge functions) would, as of September 1995, “merge” with security. The guest service representatives would receive security

⁽²⁾ Critics claimed that the newspapers, which only reported the Camp Snoopy event after a television story on it, “downplayed [the incident] because the alleged assailants were not white”. The newspaper rebutted that it was treated initially like the hundreds of other assaults that occur with no hospitalizations, that is, as not newsworthy (*ST* 20 November 1994).

training, including first aid, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, and in “defusing tense crowd situations”. Like guards, they would be uniformed and “most” would carry handcuffs, pepper spray cans, and batons. As if to counterbalance this strong image of guest service representatives converted into combatants, the mall general manager underscored that, in exchange, guards would learn guest service procedures, for indeed “92 percent of the requests that security guards get are guest-service-related” (ST 23 February 1995). This decision to blend security with PR staff provides a striking clarification and illustration of my argument about the links between PR and security. Mall security guards would thenceforth embody PR and security. As the following shows, this concept was not well realized in practice when security interacted with youth of color.

Within months of the mall’s opening, security received negative press for purportedly discriminating against youth of color. Thus, an African-American teen said of mall security guards: “they don’t want you to stand around. They will come and say you can’t just stand around. They don’t like to see black people in a huddle” (ST 14 February 1993). Voices of protest extended to white onlookers, as well. A news report in March 1993 cited the county attorney saying he had watched guards on Friday and Saturday nights order African-American male youths off benches, making no such efforts with adults or white youth. “I don’t like what is happening to the young men of color out there”, said the attorney. The county’s chief public defender stated that half the mall’s arrests had been faulty. Bloomington juvenile arrests went up 74%, from 660 in 1991 to 1140 in 1992; of these 75% occurred at the mall. This compares with mostly unchanging suburban rates, and a stable 3050 in St. Paul and 4400 in Minneapolis (ST 23 March 1993), cities of 272 235 and 368 383 inhabitants, respectively, in 1990. Such actions prompted the county attorney’s office to hold training sessions to teach mall guards what constituted legal arrest. The Bloomington police chief minimized the issue by characterizing overzealousness as typical of new hires. But the zeal was evidently race inflected: in a metro area where in 1990, 91.5% of the population was white (US Census Bureau), 44% of these arrests were of whites, 47% of African-Americans, and 8% of other people of color (ST 22 March 1993).

From this complaint onward, the mall responded. “Mall guards are colorblind”, said the marketing director (ST 22 March 1993), thereby instituting what became the minimal soundbite to counter this crisis. Front-page publicity around racial bias increased in October 1995, when a lawsuit was filed against mall security on behalf of three African-American teenagers who claimed they had been “harassed and abused” (ST 7 October 1995). One, a mall store employee, had been arrested running to catch his bus (see Jeffries, 2002). Their attorney directly raised the issue of racial bias. Conveniently, the mall “doesn’t keep track of trespassing by race”, said the PR spokesperson, whose written statement claimed “the lawsuit is without merit” (ST 7 October 1995).

Crisis management communications augment in the next lawsuit. In March 1996 parents of three African-American girls aged 14–15 years filed a lawsuit of racial discrimination after a confrontation with police and security. They had been stopped for purportedly blocking the entrance to an escalator and arrested for using foul language. One newspaper reported one of the girls was assaulted and sent handcuffed to county juvenile detention (PP 4 April 1996). Another newspaper reported that one of the girls was “hog tied” (ST 4 April 1996), and elsewhere cited the girls’ parents, who complained of brutality and racial profiling (ST 4 April 1996). The mall PR manager’s responses were spirited. In one article the spokesperson pointed out that a girl with a similar story was found not to have been unfairly singled out in a past case, and that discrimination claims in this instance were “absolutely false. *A lot of our security*

officers are minority. We go strictly on behavior. This is not a playground. This is a shopping complex. When we get kids who are very loud, who are swearing, we have to act appropriately” (ST 4 April 1996, emphasis added). Even assuming that a person of color would automatically be more just in treatment of youth of color, were the officers in question of color? The mall does not say, nor does the media. The other news source reported that “the PR manager reviewed the incident and found guards acted appropriately.” Mall tapes were made available for the lawsuit (ST 4 April 1996). One month later, the families won \$200 000 in an out-of-court settlement (ST 3 May 1996); one policeman was disciplined (ST 4 May 1996). In return, the plaintiffs’ attorney issued a statement retracting the clients’ original claim of police assault.

One more legal conflict, this time in relation to an Asian-American, exemplifies the mall’s strategy and its failure with the judge. A Hmong-American teen sued the mall for mistreatment (PP 17 July 1996). She claimed a white girl had taunted her with a racist epithet, sprayed her with mace, told security to arrest her, and they did. The mall spokesperson called the case “ridiculous”. In turn, the judge dismissed charges of assault made by the white girl against the Hmong-American girl as “ridiculous”.

The mall communications strategy with its publics is clear, if one dimensional: emphatically deny racial bias in exclusionary treatment and affirm equal rights. In response to this set of negative publicity, the mall chose what PR crisis communications calls “simply... refuting the negative publicity without any acknowledgement of the validity of the original negative message” (Henard, 2002, page 10). It is worth noting that the mall never acknowledged racial profiling or excessive force against youth of color as a practice among some of its security guards. The mall never called their behavior out of control. Consistent with their denial of a problem, no new security strategy was announced in relation to the complaints. Whereas the prior crisis communications benefited from the support of outside authorities on crime, no legal authority at all speaks to the media for the mall. Instead it is the PR spokesperson who mimics legal language, while taking advantage of a lay position to ignore what constitutes evidence. The denials unburdened by evidence or outside corroboration make one wonder which publics had found the mall defense convincing, and which were unpersuaded.

Taking the MOA’s statements of color blindness at face value, there remains an important and troublesome quality shared by the two types of crises: they *recur*. As such, it would become increasingly difficult for PR to contain fears over security competence (however defined) with reiterated countermessages and practices. And it was apparently difficult to ensure that security guard practices would not be questioned. At this point, when PR and security seemed inadequate to manage youthful diversity, the mall did announce a proactive security plan for youth—the curfew.

The Mall of America’s PR campaign for the curfew policy

This exclusionary security policy raises specific and broad questions about how the MOA succeeded in imposing such a sweeping measure over an entire class of people and, in particular, how race figured into the policy implemented as well as in the decision.

As of 20 June 1996, the mall spokesperson was featured on all media stating that, owing to the problem of unsupervised children at the mall, the MOA is “very seriously considering” requiring children *under 16* to be accompanied by a parent on weekend nights (ST 21 June 1996). The PR manager explained to local television news that “what we’re finding is that we have a lot of 13- and 14-year old kids bringing out their siblings, their younger siblings, sometimes losing them, sometimes not keeping track of them. And it really adds to an environment that we do not want people to take away

from the Mall of America" (WCCO 20 June 1996). The spokesperson lamented the problem of kids not having enough to do, as well as the need to protect tourists from misbehaving youth. Officially, then, ordinary teen problems, not crime or security unable to fairly manage youth of color, prompted the idea of a curfew.

The mall and the media tied the timing of the decision to a last-straw incident (ST 21 June 1996). This event, which most closely preceded the mall's announcement that it would impose a youth curfew, always produced a thin description in local news: a fight broke out in the food court among groups of kids aged 16–20 years [sic], at which there was an unconfirmed report of a gun. In the summer months before the curfew, both the *Washington Post* (16 September 1996) and the *New York Times* (4 September 1996) carried front-page stories on this incident and the pending curfew policy. These nonlocal news sources incorrectly presented the weapon as if confirmed; both emphasized the violence, the out-of-town victims and gave overt attention to race or ethnicity. The *New York Times* presented a particularly melodramatic narrative:

"Perhaps the worst incident came one Saturday in June. Nancy A Bordeaux and her family came to the Mall of America from Portland, Ore[gon]. They were eating hot dogs when a gang of Asian-American teen-agers chased a group of black teen-agers through a food court. One boy pointed a gun at her 16 year-old son, Felix, who is black, apparently mistaking him for one of those being chased, Mrs. Bordeaux said. Although no one was seriously hurt, 'it was pretty frightening', said Mrs. Bordeaux, who praised the mall's new policy" (4 September 1996, emphasis added).

Though the media did not point it out, the policy would *not* have spared her family from these disruptive older teens.

I selected this news coverage to indicate the national importance given to the curfew policy decision and because it is instructive for comparison with the local coverage. Outside the metro area, vivid stories complete with race-identified assailants and victims thereby produced the characters, plot, and motive for the early weekend curfew. The point illustrated here, that the media is "implicated in construction of fear, hysteria over crime, and related processes of othering in association with public spaces" (Ruddick, 1996, page 146; see also White, 1997, page 30; Zukin, 1995, page 2), can also be made for a nonhysterical mode. Thus the minimal local description without direct reference to race may reflect care to contain the 'spin', that is, shield it from controversy over race and from a racialization of space, where the MOA would gain the reputation of being a place where people of color gather. This strategy of euphemism, or sheer avoidance of race, was key to the mall's PR campaign as it addressed opposition to the curfew. Yet, as the *Times* article suggests, race was central.

Note the ambiguous use of 'gang' and 'group'. The wording seems to mean that one of the groups was indeed a gang, the other not (information this newspaper surely lacked). One can also infer that groups and gangs are interchangeable terms in reference to youth [or more strongly that "'gang' [is] a code-word for race in the United States" (Lucas, 1998, page 147)]. Regarding race, the *Washington Post* (WP) stated that "although management flatly refuses to say so, most of the young people gathering on weekends are black" (WP 16 September 1996). This unexplained claim by the *Post* seems questionable, given the demographics of an area well known nationally for its white homogeneity. I envisioned a kind of tipping-point effect, such that white people felt outnumbered when, in reality, their overwhelming majority had simply declined somewhat. A Mighty Mom, however, insisted that youth of color at the mall *were* in the absolute majority. If so, the youth had succeeded in appropriating a suburban space—for a time.

When race is overtly discussed in the media, the issue is framed as a black–white tension. The reference to Asian gangs, however, registers other racial dynamics that became important locally from the 1980s onward, when Minneapolis–St. Paul became one of the largest settlements in the USA of Southeast Asian refugees (Dunnigan et al, 1996). In this regard, note the comment of a white Bloomington mother, who remembered being “uncomfortable walking in some areas of the mall—like the fourth floor by the video arcades, if say eight Asian youth in baggy pants were there. I don’t care if they’re Asian or white, but if they’re in groups of more than four, it’s intimidating.”

Returning to the announcement and its reception, I identified three types of publicized opposition to the curfew. First, Urban League President Gary Sudduth immediately blasted the curfew plan as “racist” (*ST* 21 June 1996; also WCCO 24 June 1996). He agreed a behavioral problem existed among some youth at the megamall, and directly described an example of kids walking “seven, eight, even nine abreast. And the other patrons are fearful, because these individuals don’t get out of the way.” Sudduth objected, however, that the policy “is the furthest thing from a solution”. He said the “challenge” is to “deal with the situation” by “chang[ing] the behavior of the young people who are making it fearful for other people...” Sudduth consistently urged the mall to adopt a behavior-specific policy, and later argued that the parental escort policy would discriminate against poor families, whose parents would be unable or unavailable to accompany kids to the mall. The local chapter of the anti-right-wing group, Refuse & Resist, also opposed the plan as discriminatory against youth and racist (WCCO 3 October 1996); they organized a protest when the curfew began. Of course, the mall forbade on-site protest (*PP* 5 October 1996), thereby exemplifying Mitchell’s (2003) argument that US law allows the isolation of protests from the very sites where they can be effective.

A second type of objection pointed out (more obscurely, in letters to the editor) the contradiction in the mall’s policy in relation to the space it created: the mall cannot very well sell itself as a space in which shopping is only part of an all-encompassing consumption experience that *highlights* activities for kids, and then back off and make it out to be a place to conduct adult businesslike purchases (*ST* 23 August 1996). The third and largest group of opponents was teenagers, who argued it was unfair to punish all for the misbehavior of a few (*ST* 23 June 1996). As one told the media: “We’re just here to hang out. If someone causes trouble, kick them out. It’s not fair to people who don’t cause trouble” (*ST* 20 August 1996). “*But that’s what the mall is all about, hanging out*” said a youth, clearly identifying this generation’s sense of the purpose of the mall and disregarding private property entitlements (*ST* 20 August 1996, emphasis added; see also *ST* 23 August 1996).

Whereas MOA PR methods deployed in reaction to security problems were rather narrow, in proactive mode they appear to be far more agile. The mall quickly disposed of two objections. It threw the argument by youth that it was unfair to impose collective punishment back in their faces. With the timeworn discourse of authoritarian teachers, the mall spokesperson told the media that “a few kids spoiled it for the rest”. Mall responses to the adult public were generally more wide ranging and creative. Naturally, it relied on the power of numbers: 2000–3000 unsupervised kids there on weekend nights! Teens in groups up to fifty blocking passages! In a radio interview the mall PR spokesperson noted “there’s [sic] been tourists from all over the world that have had bad experiences on a Saturday night, because they’ve bumped into kids who are disrespectful or who are offensive and they’re loud, or they’re swearing... It’s not what we want people to take away from the Mall of America” (WCCO 24 June 1996). This reiterated desire to protect the total mall experience intended for shoppers

illustrates the “orwellian disney” Shields (1989, page 159) which others have critiqued [see, regarding Disney, Fjellman (1992, page 13), and on West Edmonton Mall, Crawford (1992, page 23)]. In sum, part of the mall’s PR campaign in effect *recycled* the previous bad press about youth into mild-mannered, depoliticizing arguments for exclusions.

Most convincingly, the mall then reasoned that being merely a private enterprise it could not very well take on problems of this magnitude—problems properly to be dealt with at the community level (*PP* 23 June 1996). In this way the mall challenged the argument that it had created the space for youth and thus it was the mall’s responsibility to handle it. Instead, the mall spokesperson repeatedly told local news it was a “community problem that kids don’t have enough things to do on weekend nights” (for example, WCCO 24 June 1996). By pointing the finger back at community and at family, calling them responsible for their children, the spokesperson provided a logic and a moral position for the assertion of private sector exclusionary policy dictating over the youthful public. The curfew’s name, “parental escort policy”, underscores the family-values message.

Many letters to the editor confirmed that the message hit home, as writers reiterated the same view (for example, *ST* 25 June 1996; 23 August 1996; *PP* 21 July 1996). Parents who drop kids off at the mall, that is, who “use the mall as a babysitter” were particularly condemned. The mall then deftly took another tack. Rather than browbeat parents, its PR team presented a whimsical ad campaign (*PP* 21 August 1996) in which an astounded blond boy exclaims: “Bring my parents?!” This award-winning ad campaign’s film poster presentation (seemingly capitalizing on the film *Home Alone*) suggested that the curfew was instituted generally over Minnesotan children and was not a reaction to children of color. (Needless to say, to have portrayed a child of color instead would have been offensive as well as demographically unrepresentative.) The ‘parental escort’ concept surely went over better with parents than with kids. “Bring your mother with you while you play video games for four hours?!” objected a child. “If you come with your mom, you’d have to go to Linens ‘N Things”, said another in disgust (*ST* 20 June 1996). Going to the mall unaccompanied had become a ‘rite of passage’ for youth, as a white suburban mother put it.

There is every reason to believe the mall’s statement that the policy was not happily or hastily chosen. Implementation would be costly and hurt profits from youth. As tourists were understood, however, to represent two times the dollars spent at malls compared to locals, and as the policy was, accordingly, only implemented on weekends—an otherwise inconsistent feature of a policy expressly based on the need for children to be supervised by parents—mall losses would be mitigated.

Legal and social contexts of support for the curfew

In this section I want to step back to reconsider the curfew’s acceptance. It would be unreasonable to attribute the success of the campaign to impose an exclusionary policy entirely to the MOA and its PR staff. The mall operated in a context of legal and social support. As is well known, in 1972 the US Supreme Court determined in *Lloyd Corp. v. Tanner* [407 US 551 (1972)] that malls, including their interior walkways, were private. The proliferation of malls, and the ever-broadening diversification of activities within them (including governmental ones), raise anew, however, the conflict between their legal status as private, versus public usage in a broader context of diminished traditional public spaces. As legal analysts (Alexander, 1999; Coffin, 2001; Freeman, 1998; Mitchell, 2003) have noted, such developments have led some groups to contest the 1972 ruling, basing themselves on US First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and assembly. However, twenty-one US states, including

Minnesota,⁽³⁾ have upheld the Supreme Court decision; in just five states (Oregon, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, and New Jersey) have the courts decided in favor of citizens' rights over property rights.⁽⁴⁾ Thus a basic point to recall is that the MOA imposed this curfew policy because it could (Sorkin, 1992b, page xv). Or better: it could harness legal power over a space of social conflict (Mitchell 1996, page 172).

At the same time, it is also the case that an infringement on civil rights, in particular the rights of historically discriminated against groups, notably people of color and women, may trigger the US courts' higher scrutiny to ensure equal protection through the 14th Amendment. If an exclusionary policy were seen to violate the Public Accommodations Act (that is, Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, making it illegal for hotels, motels, restaurants, movies, stadiums, and concert halls to refuse service based on race, color, religion, or national origin), the mall would face the likelihood of additional racial bias lawsuits. Whatever the social merits of a behavior-specific policy, therefore, its implementation would be fraught with complications. The choice of a curfew affecting all youth appears to reflect a decision to avoid messy and unpredictable legal and social complications, both of behavior specific policies and of discrimination suits. In choosing the greater exclusion, the mall protected itself from bias lawsuits and civil rights triggers. As if to ensure imperviousness to legal problems, the mall took a further prudent step of subcontracting out the task of on site enforcement of the curfew policy (*PP* 21 August 1996), as I discuss in the following section.

As the campaign to impose the curfew shows, race was consistently present but evaded as an issue, not only in verbal denials, but through legal precedent. Thus, when the mall spokesperson denies the policy is racist, the argument is coherent as it affects all youth. Under curfew, the question is not behavior but youth presence per se that is constructed as a violation.⁽⁵⁾ Yet on this same point, the US government does not extend the same scrutiny in equal protection cases where youth are concerned as it is compelled to do where race or gender are at issue, given the argument that youth [with their lesser capacities (see Sasse, 2000, page 714)] need to be protected from bad influences leading them to be hurt themselves or commit offenses against others. Furthermore, regardless of the "plausible justifications" rendering surveillance acceptable to some (Lyon, 2001, page 3), it was through the legislative process that curfews (albeit at much later hours) have been imposed in over a thousand US cities in this same time period (Norton, 2000, page 1).⁽⁶⁾ The mall usurped this power, yet did so in a way that accorded with legal precedent and the lesser protection of rights accorded to minors (see also Beger, 2002).

⁽³⁾ In Minnesota, the case was antifur protesters arrested at the MOA. By arguing for extending expressive rights based on the extent of state involvement in the mall through city financing—the city of Bloomington kicked in \$186 million in addition to the \$625 million in development funding to build the mall—the protesters' position was narrow. The mall retorted it had already paid Bloomington back. A state appeals court (7 April 1998) rejected the protesters' argument, and reiterated the Supreme Court's position that alternative areas existed for protest.

⁽⁴⁾ The New Jersey Court found both that the shopping center had assumed the role of a downtown business district (Alexander, 1999, page 14) and that the mall owners "intentionally transformed their property into a public square or market, a public gathering place, a downtown business district, a community" (cited in Coffin, 2001, page 3).

⁽⁵⁾ I thank Dan Segal for this wording.

⁽⁶⁾ In Hennepin County, where the mall is located, weekend curfew is as follows for youth: 10 pm for age 12 years and under, 11 pm for 13–14 years, 12 midnight for 15–17 year olds (*ST* 8 July 1996).

The mall did not operate in political isolation; but rather in a context in which entitled citizens champion private property rights and social control over, and sometimes against, principles of social inclusion, as seen in a “long-standing American distrust of *collective* rights” (Mitchell, 1996, page 161, emphasis original), in recurring patterns of residential segregation (Jackson, 1985; Lipsitz, 1998; Massey and Denton, 1993) and in contemporary real estate (Caldeira, 2000; Davis, 1990). Furthermore, a rising phobia against youth overall and, in particular, youth of color, perceived as involved in crime (see, for example, Cahill, 1990, page 398, cited in Valentine, 1996, page 213; Glassner, 1999; Lucas, 1998, page 145), also shaped the context for receptivity toward the reprivatization measure.

In the early 1990s news articles in the United States spotlighted crimes at the mall and emphasized the alarming increase in serious violent crimes by juveniles across the Twin Cities metro area: from 130 per 100 000 juveniles in 1980 to 270 in 1990 to 400 in 1994 (*PP* 21 February 1996). There was also the infamous report in the *New York Times* (*NYT*) in the summer of 1996 (the same summer the curfew was announced) that Minneapolis had become Murderopolis because that summer its per capita murder rate (forty in one summer) exceeded New York City's (evidently owing to a crack cocaine crisis). Meanwhile, from the 1980s onward, the metro area experienced what for it was unprecedented demographic diversification. Yet with all the influx of Southeast Asians since 1980, the substantial increase in the Latino population, and the more recent Somalian settlement, overall the metro area in 2000 was 84.7% white, having been 91.5% white in 1990 and 94.8% white in 1980. The police were endlessly reported saying that the mall was very safe, the security force excellent, and that fears were overblown, owing to the spotlighting on the mall. Police clarified that certain clothing was not a sure sign of gang membership (for example, *ST* 20 March 1995) and insisted that the reports of gang activity were highly exaggerated. The Bloomington chief of police even pointed out, in reference to the impending curfew policy, that the issue was not about criminality or even safety: “Let's be clear. We're talking about noncriminal conduct by a bunch of snotty-nosed kids” (*NYT* 18 September 1996). Yet he also emphasized that “kids are more violent today” (*PP* 24 August 1996).

With this policy securing the mall space for adults, the MOA added a preemptive exclusion of a class of people onto a security system based on a disciplinary force in a panopticon surveillance environment. Yet I must point out some ironies in the policy. First, kids can be in many spaces of the MOA on weekend evenings—all four anchor stores, the movie theaters, all video arcades (including one located within a bar), and all of Camp Snoopy. The only exceptions publicized, however, are the anchors and the movies. Access to the other places requires arriving before curfew. Clearly, these exceptions were concessions to powerful tenants. Second, the majority of violent crime at the mall was always, and remains, that committed by adults. So, in a word, the policy responded less to actually existing crime than to negative perceptions of youth (as intimidating or obnoxious).

Most winningly, the MOA's PR campaign for the curfew policy was always presented as if the mall, facing the problem, relinquished its agency and asked the community to step in, when in fact, it exerted power over the community, telling a part of it to stay out. The mall claimed its parental escort policy drew overwhelmingly positive responses; the media obligingly published this assertion (*PP* 21 August 1996). There is every reason to believe that protests about difficult youth came from complaining shoppers who wanted to reclaim the space as adult (Matthews et al, 2000; Valentine, 1996), and from some store owners who favored an exclusionary measure. It seems plausible, as an African-American community leader active in North Minneapolis noted, that people of color (in particular, African-Americans) felt targeted by the policy.

It is also not surprising that voices of protest from communities of color were not aired in the mainstream press. The few dissenting African-American voices could be dismissed by others unconvinced precisely when charges of racism are put forth by people of color.

In closing this section, while drawing attention to the legal and social supports for such a policy, I still underscore that the mall made a private decision over a class of people. Although the curfew announcement provoked some public debate, including support for the curfew, the decisionmaking process was not an open democratic one with public meetings or hearings (*ST* 20 June 1996). Rather, the decision was privately made via PR methods (an undisclosed number of consultations with community leaders and focus groups) and a PR campaign allowing people to air views, to be sure, and allowing time for people to get used to the idea. Let us turn, finally, to the security who implemented the curfew, the Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads, to understand better how the mall engaged community of color in regulating youth (White, 1997).

Turning bad PR into friendly security

A new PR/security corps first began circulating at the MOA in April 1996. According to newspaper reports, “faced with 2000 unsupervised youth on some weekend nights”, the mall responded by creating Mighty Moms, “a group of about 20 African American women ‘community liaisons’ paid [about] \$20 per hour by the mall to cruise the mall seeking to defuse bad situations” (*ST* 20 June 1996). According to Todd Barnes (African-American), former Executive Director of Club Fed, a federation of agencies working with youth,

“Mighty Moms came about because Club Fed had worked with Mall of America employees who volunteered as chaperones for a series of summer events for kids who lived in the projects: 2000 kids to Valley Fair, 1000 kids to the state fair, 700 kids [tubing] down the Apple River. So they were major major events [sponsored by the MOA]. They saw how we conducted business and... how effective we were working with the chaperones. We had a really good relationship, our organization, with the Mall of America staff. And so they realized that those same kids who lived in the inner city were hanging out at the Mall of America on evenings and weekends, and they had security issues. And they thought, the thought was if instead of bolstering security, with regular folks in uniforms, if you could begin to use some of the parents of the kids who were hanging out—hence the idea of Mighty Moms—that would be a much smoother and more creative way to deal with kids ‘cause the kids would then know a lot of the parents.”

Barnes repeated, “Instead of more people in uniform”. Barnes corrected the notion of colleagues that he had created the concept: “It really was the mall’s idea to ask the parents to be a part of the chaperoning at the mall. What I did and my staff did, we came up with the name of Mighty Moms and then put the whole entire process together as far as employing them.” The MOA contracted Club Fed to recruit Mighty Moms and pay them as Club Fed employees with funds from the mall’s PR budget. Club Fed’s ties to the community were key to the program. Said Barnes: “We then reached out to our member agencies—because our organization was made up of 80 agencies, different youth service agencies—so we had a vast pool of inner city moms. The process was unique in that we recruited folks through the agencies ... from the community.” Barnes noted that the high-paying nature of the job was a strong incentive, making recruitment extremely easy. “Five years ago, six years ago, to get \$18.50 an hour was very good money. That was a huge deal and the mall paid for that, you know. We did payroll, but they sent us the checks. It really showed their commitment to that concept. Beyond just using the community to their own benefit, those were darn good paying jobs.”

The initial supervisor of the Mighty Moms program, Club Fed staff member and a Mighty Mom herself, Valesha Beeks (African-American) emphasized the diversity of the program advertised largely through word of mouth. Beeks said: "What we were trying to do was recruit various people throughout the community—teachers, counselors, clergy, some were parents, at home moms—to communicate with kids. People from the private sector and the corporate world... Yes, some people from the mall became Mighty Moms. It was all kinds of people, Caucasian, Asian, it was a rainbow. What we looked for ... was people who cared about kids."

The Mighty Moms soon received accolades from the African-American mayor of Minneapolis, Sharon Sayles Belton, who fondly recalled growing up with women in her community watching over the behavior of any child. She said, "Who better than moms? It's hard to sass back or be mean to somebody's mom or grandmom. It's going to be an effective strategy. It's called tapping into the community for solutions" (*ST* 27 April 1996).

Though the Dedicated Dads began six months after the Mighty Moms (in September 1996, one month before the curfew began), Barnes dated the idea of Dads almost immediately after the idea of Mighty Moms. Beeks recalled "people were saying we had groups of boys getting into trouble who needed role models. But", she recalled with a laugh, "there always were more moms calling in than dads". Barnes agreed that the Mighty Moms were central at the program's inception. "The Moms were always in my mind the star of the show. Dedicated Dads [also named by Club Fed] came along after ... but the mothers always seemed front and center, who was featured, the pioneers of the program."

We can appreciate the effectiveness of the naming. The fictive kin terms connote loving authority in general. The qualifier 'mighty' conjures up the image of the strong African-American woman, yet softens it in the whimsical, alliterative phrase. Dedicated Dads counters a negative stereotype of absentee parenting, as well as worries over the excessive strength "mighty dads" might have evoked (see Page, 1996).

The mall, to its credit, sought help from the African-American community and forged a partnership, as Club Fed staff emphasized, to handle the "youth problem" at the mall. Community organizers of North Minneapolis each underscored their respect for the willingness of MOA managers to seek and take advice from communities of color.

Another original Mighty Mom whom I interviewed, Lottie Dixon (African-American), had understood, initially, that she was responding to an appeal for volunteers. In her view, she and other Mighty Moms did it out of conviction about children and community without knowing it would be well paid. "Children are my future", said Dixon. "I'm very touchy about my future." Dixon made a point of correcting a conception that the work was done just for the money, as though the very association of paid work with parenting suggested an unflattering notion that parents of color need to be paid in order to parent properly (Elizabeth Chin, personal communication). Mighty Mom recruiter and supervisor Beeks concurred: "I can honestly say that the people involved genuinely cared to have a positive impact, wanted to have things go right at the mall. Kids coming out would see the Mighty Mom and think she looks like my mom, or my aunt, or my teacher or pastor, people they would have a relationship with."

In her conversations with me, Dixon emphasized two points: "If you respect them, they'll respect you." And "They have to give me respect. I'll give it back. I demand respect. I don't stand down." Dixon had to quit this job she so enjoyed, owing to family and personal health problems, but offered a critical opinion on how things later developed at the mall. She said, disapprovingly, "after that I heard that they started teaming up Moms and Dads with security guards."

Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads were teamed up with security from the beginning (receiving some security training as well), according to Beeks and Barnes, but their strategies differed. Barnes maintained that “security is very different from outreach, the Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads really provided outreach, *there was a real line between security and these other folks* that worked there” (emphasis added). What was different between them and security, said Barnes, “was the time spent with the kids, the incentive to have that extra 20 minute conversation with a kid to avert having to call security. Yeah, they worked hand in hand, but security did not have any incentive to sit there and ask the kid where they went to school, how their school work was coming, did they attend, how are things at home, do you have a ride, where are the rest of your friends. That wasn’t the line of questioning traditionally security would ask, in my opinion, but these mothers, I know for a fact, did ask.” Indeed, an African-American girl I spoke to who was 15 at the time the curfew was implemented indicates the impact of the new security methods, including the persistent parenting questions. “They’d come and ask you 101 questions, who you were with, how’d you get out there It got dead. Now it’s the biggest place for tourists. It got boring.”

Club Fed staff viewed the program overall as a “partnership, we were in it together to make this happen.” Beeks believed teaming up was essential to the effectiveness of each corps in their work. In fact, Beeks insisted, it would not have worked otherwise, in either direction: “the *only* way for it to work was not only us and not only them.” Beeks’ description of how Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads looked and operated illustrates the strategy of teamwork with distinctions between this corps and other security. At first (and until cold weather arrived, when they switched to sweatshirts), Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads wore bright yellow tee shirts and matching black and yellow baseball caps—“like bumble bees, very cute”, said Beeks. They worked in pairs, two Mighty Moms, two Dedicated Dads, or, for safety reasons, one Dad and a security officer. Beeks figured that “the security officers, with their belts, were a bit intimidating—authority figures. If you didn’t feel comfortable talking to security, you could talk to me.” The pairing up of one of their group with security appeared to extend their use as community liaisons.

Although the Mighty Moms and the parent escort policy began at different times, the one in April, the other in October, the fact that most discussion of Mighty Moms occurred at the time the curfew policy was first announced (in June 1996) led me to wonder whether the two initiatives were simply in tandem, as the mall implied, or linked, and about where race figured in each. Barnes’s perspective was that the two were different policies, conceived as two different ways of handling the issue of youth, especially of color. Beeks, who had insisted that the majority of the kids out at the mall were indeed of color, confirmed that Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads were specially assigned to enforce the curfew policy. The MOA also subcontracted thirty American Security Corps guards to aid enforcement in a cost-effective way (see Jacobs, 1984, pages 71ff).

Regarding race, Beeks supports the mall’s assertions that the problem was not racial, but children misbehaving. “With any policy, any rule, the first thing you hear is race, but then working at the mall, we did see kids misbehaving, not handling their business. When you get out there and work, you see it has nothing to do with race.” She did not comment on the potential misunderstanding the conflation of race and misbehaving youth could create. Barnes differed. As he put it:

“Race is always an undercurrent, certainly was an undercurrent in this instance. Clearly this was racial, clearly the number of youth of color out at that mall . . . alarmed tourists and other folks out there and there needed to be something dealt with, the question was what. The first step [the MOA] came up with was Mighty

Moms and Dedicated Dads. The second thing was this curfew policy. But it was targeting the same kids. It was not Mary and Jim's children from Edina that were being targeted by either of these two [policies]. Otherwise they would've gone to Central Lutheran Church in Edina and recruited Mighty Moms and Dads. They did not do this because they did not view as an issue or challenge John and Mary's children. They viewed Tyrone and Chikwita's children as the issue. And that's clearly why they targeted us. I understood that as the director [of Club Fed] and I had no problem working with them."

As we have seen, the MOA forged a partnership with people of color to ensure the policy would manage race as well as youth. Though led by a partnership with the African-American community, the corps included the 'rainbow' of ethnicities, thus revealing a sense of race in the community beyond black-white dynamics. From another perspective, the curfew policy was predicated on the collaboration of communities of color. Barnes immediately directed my attention to the useful subordinated role the Mighty Moms played at the mall:

"The Mall of America with their parent escort policy were able to hide behind Club Fed, if you will, for political coverage. The Mighty Moms were able to provide some cover for that escort policy. And I don't say that as a negative. I say we were an entity working with the Mall of America; we did have a partnership. We stood by our partner in trying to provide some assistance with the enacting of that policy. We certainly provided them cover to be able to go ahead and do that. And so they were going to be able to say that enforcement was really going to be by these Mighty Moms, not by security."

Barnes felt entirely comfortable with this cooperation; he understood his role was to "represent the 80 human service agencies and protect their contract and jobs [for employees]." While recognizing the "mall culture" governed the Mighty Moms program, and while pointing to the uses of Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads, Barnes's focus was the good jobs obtained as well as the potential of this corps for producing a creative community-led method of working with youth of color. Rather than handing over the trouble to some usual agency or process, they chose Club Fed (which had the contract for the full first two years). Doing so, said Barnes, meant that 90% of the money went to the people (not the reverse, the more usual ratio). He added: "hopefully kids benefited, certainly the moms and dads who worked there did, and we hope that the mall was a safer, more enjoyable place because the moms and dads were out there." Barnes concluded, accordingly, that

"although *this story is clouded by race and income*, what a courageous courageous thing for the Mall of America to do in terms of daring to think outside the box, to treat the people in the inner city good enough to at least provide them 18 dollar and 50 cent an hour jobs, and hopefully in the future those kinds of linkages can flourish, and somehow people come to win win situations to address those challenges. I really do give a lot of credit to the mall, even in view of all the other peripheral issues [sic] that are always going to stare our society in the face. They took a chance; they're the big boys on the mall block in America and they led the way in trying to do something different and that's a very big deal; they stepped out" (emphasis added).

Beeks, who served for one year as Mighty Mom supervisor, reflected, "it's kind of cool how it expanded and exists until today."

Four years later my observations showed the demographics of the Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads had not changed appreciably. Eighteen of the nineteen original Mighty Moms were African-American (*ST* 27 April 1996), by the time of the curfew policy, half the thirty Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads were African-American, seven Asian,

and the rest white (*ST* 4 October 1996). During my weekend visits, I was able to identify eleven Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads, of whom eight were of color (including two Latinas, an Asian man, four African-American men and one African-American woman). Their training, strong on professional experience working with youth, struck Barnes as being unlike the more organic moms and dads of the beginning. The two Latina Mighty Moms I briefly spoke to in 2000 had long years of experience with youth groups. One, a graduate student in education, said she had worked with practically every Latino/a youth group in town. The first Dedicated Dad I spoke to, a middle-aged African-American, told me he was a father of four girls, and that his daytime job was as probation officer. His African-American colleagues include a truancy officer and a public school employee. A young African-American Dedicated Dad told me that the Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads have the “exact same training as security, but different prior [work] experience and orientation. We’re more social. They’re more criminal justice. We’re more social workers, community liaisons.”

Restricted as I was to observation, generally out of earshot, my attention was drawn to structure. I noticed some significant patterns in the deployment of Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads and other security of color at the mall. The nightly performances of the fictive kin demonstrated strong coordination with security, the entirety arranged in a hierarchy of command, perceptible visibly: each higher level is more heavily belted. The following illustration of security in action resembles the incident described in the opening. I present it here precisely to emphasize the unified strategy.

One Saturday evening I followed two security guards, one an African-American subcontracted guard, the other a white Mall security guard, from the third floor east side to the north food court (in a matter of minutes, walking quickly), where the young African-American Dedicated Dad cited above was talking closely to two African-American youths. The (white) MOA guard immediately took over. In seconds, several more security guards arrived. The Dedicated Dad and the other African-American subcontracted security walked away. Moments later, the other guards had moved away from the area and were joking with customers. Later that night this same young Dedicated Dad stopped about three feet away from me, where I was leaning against a railing observing several African-American teenaged girls gathered around a bench outside of Marshall’s (a discount outlet). Using his walkie-talkie, the Dad identified a male by name and described his location—going up the stairs at Sears. As soon as he walked away, two of the African-American girls jumped up and leaned over the railing to alert some boys on the floor below. One called down, it seemed teasingly, “Security is after you, they’re out to get you, they’ve got you on camera.”

What I saw this and other evenings was some presence of Mighty Moms, but mainly strong looking Dedicated Dads acting in the ‘front lines’, again not autonomously but in a chain of command. Their plainclothed appearance visually distanced them from security, but they served, it seemed clear, like bouncers. Overall, my weekend observations showed a lightning-quick team, in which roles of various security corps seemed clearly defined and coordinated, their verbal interactions calm, unrelenting, scripted, their visible presence always suggesting the powerful technology to back them.

I also found at the time that uniformed security people *of color* were few in the mall’s employ. That is to say of staff on weekend nights that I saw, just three of the mall’s permanent security staff were of color (an African-American man and woman, and an Asian man). The two mobile patrols I saw included one white and one African-American officer. Two of the fifteen or so subcontracted guards were of color.

Although not mall personnel, all Bloomington police I saw were white. The fact that overall security is white is not problematic; after all, the metro area, as I have noted, is overwhelmingly white. By contrast, therefore, the racial composition of the Mighty Moms and Dads is all the more striking.

Most importantly, I saw that these few security guards of color were strategically positioned. Counting and recounting as security went on duty Friday and Saturday nights, and following people to their posts, I found on every single field visit that, first, *all* uniformed security positioning is skewed towards the east side, the side of the transit station, where those who arrive by public transportation enter. These are, in their vast majority, people of color, notably unaccompanied youth. Second, and most important, the security staff members who meet, greet, or block those entering at the major east entrances are also predominantly of color. (Note that working weekends was required of all security guards.) At the main floor entrance there was always an African-American mall security guard, at times joined by an African-American from the subcontracted corps and/or Mighty Mom or Dedicated Dad. Three people of color were at the transit center, of which two were usually African-Americans—the strongest looking Dedicated Dads and one Mall security guard of color. In 2000 the friendly, informally dressed staff called Mighty Moms and Dedicated Dads were at the forefront meeting the racially and ethnically diverse public upon arrival and in areas of congregation. This politically correct, legally protective policy is, of course, the opposite of color blind.

Conclusions: displacements and managed inclusions

As US metropolitan areas, though increasingly diverse, consist largely of suburban neighborhoods that are stratified by income, race, and ethnicity, legally private spaces like malls represent key places in which diverse groups and individuals can congregate. Fully cognizant that superficial encounters may serve to form essentialist, stereotypes of racialized others, political theorist and philosopher Young nonetheless argues that geographic or “*embodied* public space[s]... contribute to democratic inclusion because they bring differently positioned strangers into one another’s presence; they make concrete the fact that people of differing tastes, interests, needs and life circumstances dwell together in a city or region” (2000, pages 213–214). The MOA became a meeting place of diverse publics, in a sense akin to Young’s embodied space, with a potential for a shift in the racial, ethnic, class-based balance of power and for de facto public uses. Yet many have forewarned us that such spaces are compromised because the “fortress character of urban development and the intensive administration of urban space... alter the relationship between public and private” (Christopherson, 1994, page 410); because malls are illusory public spaces (Crawford, 1992; Goss, 1993; Gottdiener, 1997; Langman, 1992; Lewis, 1990; but see Lowe, 1998); because malls are racialized spaces where whites, first and for all, are welcome (Chin, 2001; Hartigan, 1999; Hill, 1998; Linke, 1998; Ruddick, 1996); and because malls are adult spaces (Valentine, 1996).

In the short four years of its existence, the MOA became a terrain of struggle among local publics with competing claims to the space (Fiske, 1989). In turn the mall was obliged to juggle its relations with diverse publics, from a racially, ethnically, and generationally divided local population to worried investors and angry tenants. The issues and events surrounding the imposition of a curfew at the MOA illustrate the shift emphasized in the literature on governmentality, from societies with individualizing disciplinary measures to contemporary forms in which security measures are applied over whole classes of people or populations (Koskela, 2000; Nunn, 2001) with future-oriented, preemptive monitoring (and self-monitoring) practices that organize space more so than individuals (Bayley and Shearing, 1996; Crawford, 1992; Rose, 1999).

The MOA curfew policy targets youth whose sheer presence appears to have represented a potential threat to corporate interests as their profits still depend importantly on middle-class adults (as individuals or composed in families with small children), who in turn count on suburban malls to be safe, family oriented, fun, that is to say, sanitized environments rather than adventures in social realism (Jacobs, 1984). Exclusion from a mall conveys a message that those expelled from this sanitized, sacrosanct space violate the moral order, epitomized in family consumption (Sibley, 1995).

This paper has emphasized the racial underpinnings of the youth curfew, as well as implications for racial subjectivities, contemporary governmentality, and political culture. In my reading, the mall strategy to impose an acceptable exclusionary policy involved two acts of *dis-placement*—one literal, the exclusionary curfew policy itself, the other discursive. Uncomfortable questions of local racial and class intolerance and/or intolerance of youth per se could be elided in a profamily, procommunity discourse. The issue of xenophobia could be displaced onto rural folk and tourists who wished merely to enjoy their long-planned trip to the mall. The measure was reasonably presented through a profamily, procommunity discourse.⁽⁷⁾

As it applied to all youth, the curfew policy answered the ‘race question’ with a reassuringly color-blind policy. Better yet, reliance on subcontracted security of color to accomplish the exclusions provided a cost-effective avoidance of potential charges of racial bias. The mall also evaded questions over differential effects of the curfew policy on youth by race and class. Thus to a challenge that “on paper the policy is race-neutral, but it’s pretty clear who it would affect. It would affect young children of color”, the mall spokesperson as usual denied racism (WCCO 24 June 1996). Chin’s (2001) ethnography of the consumer lives of children of color in New Haven, CT is particularly relevant here. As she has shown, measures taken to discourage poor youth, in the majority African-Americans, from using the downtown New Haven mall directly jeopardized the safety, security, and socializing opportunities of these children of color, whose neighborhoods were highly unsafe. (See also Bromley and Thomas, 1992; Miles, 2002; Muncie et al, 1999; Valentine, 1996; Vanderbeck and Johnson, 2000; Williams et al 2001.) The MOA’s reliance on family values provided an effective evasion of the issue of whose safety and social opportunities and identities would be protected, and whose not.

The mall had the law on its side regarding differential effects. US law requires that racial bias be proven to have been *intentional*, such as in early-20th-century racially restrictive covenants that specified segregative policy. Differential *effects* by race do not count as racism in US courts (powell, 1996). This policy, affecting as it would all youth, spawned differential effects relating to the combined disadvantages of race, ethnicity, and class, all the while ignoring, or rather displacing them. Future research on commercial spaces might further examine class dimensions of such segregative policies.

This paper also emphasized that it is not just that PR helps security, but that *security is itself PR*. Although it is critical to examine the strategies of the powerful producing such sites and the price paid (Rose, 1999, page 273), I concur with others that it is no less essential to consider the receptivity among the so-called mainstream to the high-security environments of malls, possibly prompted by the desire for security and predictability, racism, xenophobia, and combinations thereof (Christopherson, 1994, page 413; Hannigan, 1998; Harvey, 1992; Sorkin, 1992a). As Jackson notes: “The mall is designed to protect middle-class patrons from the moral confusion that

⁽⁷⁾ Yet, as Devine (1995) argues with reference to security and surveillance in US schools, such measures mean that youth relations to adults are increasingly with adult guards.

might result from unmediated confrontation with social difference" (1998, page 178). A portion of the white middle class may not wish to be reminded of the actual diversity of the metro region when they go to a mall nor of the unpleasant measures to regulate it (Baumgartner, 1998), preferring a milieu in which they can allow themselves to believe other stories about themselves, society, and their place in it. The curfew reinstated a setting where older stories of race that "prefigure unplanned encounters" (Ruddick, 1996, page 139) could persist. As many have suggested, the regulated private malls are, for some, a solution to public space.

For some publics, security is itself a positive presence and form of PR. Youth, especially youth of color, disturbed the prefigured mall experience and were excluded, not through a public process, but through private decisions and a pseudo process of approval via a public relations campaign. Although exclusion was the key act, it is clear that the optimal solution, from a *marketing* standpoint, is a mall not devoid of diversity, but a space where diversity is managed. In the enclosed mall spaces people can indeed be more readily controlled (Boddy, 1992; but see Fyfe and Bannister, 1998; Smith, 1992). MOA strategies are exclusionary, but the repertoire extends to managed inclusion of diverse publics via a kind of disneyfication of security (see Warren, 1992; Zukin, 1990), complete with 'parental figures' (albeit whose kinship qualities were tarnished by association with money and seemed moot as time went on).

The mall's solution of security of color, their 'tapping into the community for solutions' and subordinating this corps into the hierarchy of security where their special function is to manage diversity with diversity, was smart. People of color not only manage diversity but, as Sudduth put it, "signal... out to the white population [that] 'we are instituting a policy that will take care of the problem that has led to your fear of coming to the mall'" (WCCO 24 June 1996). On a weekly basis mall security enact a script, in perfect coordination of PR and security, in which they discipline and exclude while sending out reassuring public relations messages about racial relations.

The organization of security and the curfew policy, replete with exceptions to the rule, suggest that rather than engaged in controlling crime first and for all, mall management, through its blend of security and PR, is centrally concerned with controlling racial dynamics simultaneously with messages about race, as it secures a prominent place in a pluralistic democracy. Besides all the state-of-the-art technology, what remains crucial is a carefully deployed security that variously reassures or repels the publics, all the while masking issues of race and class in the control efforts and effects. As shopping centers assume an increasingly regulatory role over spaces open to the public, our reflections on commercial spaces will be furthered if we take into account the deployment of public relations to stand in for democratic process and their ongoing strategies in constructing community.

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