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## Archive Notes

**Study: 3489**

Please note that the following place codes are missing from the coding section

arch	Archway (Highgate)
bc	Brent Cross
eg	Edgware
hwick	High Wickham
n finc	Finchley
uni	University
var	Various
wh	Whetstone

## The Social Milieux of Two North London Shopping Centres

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**Abstract:**

As part of a larger project involving both quantitative and qualitative methods, this paper discusses findings from a questionnaire survey at Brent Cross and Wood Green concerning the social use of two north London shopping centres. The results explore the relationship between consumption and identity, challenging several commonly-held assumptions about the nature of contemporary consumption. The paper argues that 'regional' centres (like Brent Cross) have a surprisingly 'local' clientele, that the two centres differ less markedly in terms of their social class characteristics than might have been expected, with a diversity of respondents at both shopping centres. It was further found that 'family shopping' is a convenient metaphor in the marketing of the centres rather than an accurate description of most people's shopping practices and preferences. The paper highlights the need to gain a more thorough understanding of the views of ordinary consumers in everyday places (like Wood Green and Brent Cross) as well as researching the more spectacular sites of world's fairs, expositions and 'mega malls'.

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## Introduction

Much of the recent literature on contemporary consumption has focussed on large-scale, 'out-of-town' shopping and entertainment complexes such as Canada's West Edmonton Mall or the Mall of America in Minnesota and on their British counterparts such as Meadowhall, Metrocentre, Maryhill and Lakeside (Hopkins, 1990, Shields, 1989, Goss, 1993, Chaney, 1990, Lowe, 1993). Research has explored the policy implications of increased competition for city centres (OXIRM, 1992, Howard, 1993, Howard & Davies, 1993, Williams, 1995) and the opportunity that these mega-malls provide for new kinds of 'lifestyle' shopping (Shields, 1992). Much less attention has been paid in academic and policy circles to more mundane centres, such as Brent Cross and Wood Green, which (however novel they may once have been) have now become an accepted part of many people's everyday lives. Little is known of the social characteristics of the kinds of people that are attracted to shopping in these places. Even less is known about what people actually do when they go shopping. This paper reports some of the key findings from the survey phase of an ESRC funded project on the social use of shopping centres which also involves qualitative research using ethnographic and focus group methods, some of the results of which are reported elsewhere (Holbrook & Jackson, 1995, Jackson & Holbrook, 1995). The project aims to explore the relationship between consumption and identity and to provide a solid empirical foundation with which to interrogate current theoretical concerns.<sup>1</sup>

Rather than providing a detailed review of the rapidly growing literature on contemporary consumption, we wish to highlight some of the weaknesses that our own research aims to counter.<sup>2</sup> Others have drawn attention to the neglect of gender issues in "masculine encounters with the megamall" (Gregson, 1995) and to the lack of historical depth in many studies of contemporary consumption (Glennie & Thrift,

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<sup>1</sup> The project is funded by the ESRC under grant number R000234443 and involves an interdisciplinary team of anthropologists and geographers. Besides the authors, the team includes Daniel Miller and Michael Rowlands (Anthropology, UCL) and Nigel Thrift (Geography, Bristol). We would like to thank Elizabeth Howard and the other members of the project team for their detailed comments on a previous draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive review of the recent literature see the various essays in Miller (1995).

1992, Pred, 1995) While earlier economic studies were often characterised by an undue emphasis on the point of sale rather than on shopping as a social process and, in the past, cultural studies tended to ignore the wider ramifications of capital restructuring in the retail industry, there is now a growing and welcome rapprochement between economic and cultural approaches (Wrigley & Lowe, 1996, *Environment and Planning A*, in press) We would suggest that there is still too little emphasis on the views of ordinary consumers and too few studies of relatively mundane shopping environments (such as Wood Green and Brent Cross), compared to the emphasis on spectacular places like mega-malls, world's fairs and expositions In general, we approach shopping as involving the intersection of producers, retailers and consumers and as involving the circulation of commodities and symbols (texts and images) between particular sites (homes, shops, workplaces) Here, however, we aim to provide evidence from survey research regarding the social milieu of two north London shopping centres which allows us to challenge some of the conventional wisdom on contemporary consumption<sup>3</sup>

### **The choice of shopping centres and survey methodology**

The two centres were selected because they were already well-known to members of the research team, because they were expected to reveal significant differences in terms of the class and ethnic composition of their customers resulting from their location in inner and outer London (see *Table 1*) and because they were well-established and 'ordinary' centres (not recently-opened, large-scale shopping and entertainment complexes) The centres allowed us to compare the experience of shopping in different kinds of shopping environment including a high street, a shopping mall and both indoor and outdoor markets Brent Cross is a purpose-built, out-of-town regional shopping centre, located close to the southern end of the M1 motorway and

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<sup>3</sup> 'Milieux' is a term with a long history in geographical research, particularly in the French tradition, as reviewed by Buttner (1971) Here we are using the word in a less specialised sense to evoke the social context of shopping in particular places which, over time, may have accumulated particular meanings

adjacent to the North Circular Road in the Borough of Barnet. The centre was opened in 1976 and has 82 shops mostly concerned with fashion retailing. There are branches of Hennes, Miss Selfridge and other major fashion outlets as well as a large Marks & Spencer's, two department stores (John Lewis and Fenwicks) and a supermarket (Waitrose). When Brent Cross was opened it was the first purpose-built regional shopping centre in Britain. It was regarded as quite spectacular at the time and was described by the media in London as "the housewife's dream", a place which exemplified a new form of shopping where a washing machine, a new dress or a pound of apples could be bought in the same place.<sup>4</sup> In recent years other larger shopping centres have been built and Brent Cross is responding to increased competition through an expansion of the centre, providing significantly increased floorspace, additional car parking and a major refurbishment of most of the indoor circulation space ("Plans for a Bigger Brent Cross Shopping Centre", *Hendon and Finchley Times*, 9 January 1992)

Wood Green Shopping City is a mixed commercial and residential development in the 'inner city' London borough of Haringey, inside the North Circular Road and close to Wood Green and Turnpike Lane underground stations. Opening in 1981, the centre has an indoor Shopping City with 77 units including one small department store (D H Evans) and branches of C&A, Boots and W H Smith alongside several smaller stores. Next to the centre is a post office and a public library, with a supermarket (Safeway) in an adjacent development.

The project on which this paper is based includes focus groups at the neighbourhood scale and ethnographic research at the household and street level. Here, however, we concentrate on the findings of a large-scale social survey at the two shopping centres and some of the insights and understandings from the focus group research to contextualise research results. The questionnaire was designed after the first phase of focus groups was complete in order to allow us to pursue some of the

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<sup>4</sup> "Brent Cross - it's the housewives' dream", *Evening Standard*, 6 May 1976, p 10

themes that arose in the group discussions and to provide greater breadth of information and substantive evidence in addition to the focus group results. This also helped to ensure that the survey was sensitive to local issues and concerns.

We used the questionnaire to begin an investigation of the kinds of social identity of people who shop at the centres and their social experience of shopping. We did this through asking people about their occupation, ethnic origin, educational qualifications, the people that lived with them in their household, people's personal and household income, age and the newspapers they read. As we wished to compare our research results with other sources we could not make a radical departure from previous operationalisations of income, class, race and other indicators of social differentiation provided by the OPCS (Social Trends, General Household Survey and the Census). The survey was piloted at both centres and, after some initial changes, further piloted at one of the centres (Wood Green). Besides the core members of the research team, two work-placement students from Huddersfield University (Zoe Phillipides and Geoff Southall) also worked on the survey with us for three months as part of their undergraduate training. They received training in survey work and helped input the data via Quattro Pro and Excel for subsequent analysis using SPSS. We interviewed mainly on week-days over a 12 week period during May, June and July 1994, at lunchtimes and late afternoons, with some interviewing at each centre on Saturdays and week-day mornings.

The questionnaire was administered as shoppers left the centres, concentrating on the main exits but also including some interviews at the less busy exits. Bev Holbrook supervised the interviewers and visited them regularly in the field to ensure consistency and accuracy in data collection<sup>5</sup>. We did not attempt to secure a quota or random sample but asked every person to complete a questionnaire who passed by who did not obviously look in the other direction or change their path. If we had tried

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<sup>5</sup> Efforts were made to ensure that the interviewers safety was protected whilst doing this work. The shopping centre managers were informed about their daily movements and a timetable was given to the security guards at each centre.

to randomly sample shoppers using a method such as approaching every tenth shopper we would have been interviewing at the shopping centre for far longer than we actually did and we did not have the time and resources for this. We could not have quota sampled shoppers as we did not know beforehand what the social profile of the centres would be on the basis of gender, ethnicity, social class and place of residence etc, Response rates are therefore difficult to assess and varied on a daily basis. On some days it would only take about two hours to complete ten questionnaires, on other days it could take four hours to get ten or fewer questionnaires completed. Similar methods have been employed elsewhere (Bloch et al, 1991, Feinberg et al, 1989) and our methods are comparable with previous surveys of Brent Cross and Wood Green (David Peake Associates, 1992, Donaldsons, 1988). We maintained comparability of research results through ensuring that the times of interviews were the same for each centre, so for example, if one week we interviewed in the afternoon at Brent Cross between 3-6pm in the afternoon then this was followed the next week by interviews at 3-6pm at Wood Green and so on. In order to confirm the representativeness of our survey, various checks were employed. Survey results were compared with 1991 Census data for the areas immediately surrounding the two centres. Pedestrian counts and other forms of observational data were also collected at the two centres, which enhanced the results of the survey and also indicate the strengths and weaknesses of the survey data.

### **The social milieu of Brent Cross and Wood Green shopping centres**

Rather than simply reporting the results of the survey, we have chosen to highlight certain key findings which enable us to challenge our pre-existing assumptions and those of other researchers concerning the social use of shopping centres, the social characteristics of people that shopped there and the nature of contemporary consumption more generally. First, though, we report some basic characteristics of the sample. Altogether 601 questionnaires were completed at the two centres, 286 (48%) at Wood Green and 315 (52%) at Brent Cross. The majority of respondents were

shopping on their own (83% at Wood Green, 85% at Brent Cross) with a smaller percentage shopping in groups (16% at Wood Green, 15% at Brent Cross) Response rates were lower for some groups (particularly mothers with young children) in view of the time taken to complete the questionnaire (ten minutes or more) Public transport was the dominant mode of travel to both centres, with slightly more people (21%) using a car to reach Brent Cross than Wood Green (19%) (see *Table 2*) The mean amount of money spent at Brent Cross was almost twice as high as at Wood Green (£31.42 compared to £16.00) although there was much greater variation of expenditure at Brent Cross than at Wood Green (with standard deviations of 68.7 and 20.2) As might be expected from its out-of-town location and 'regional' clientele, people spent longer at Brent Cross, averaging almost one and a half hours at Brent Cross compared to just over one hour at Wood Green (see *Table 3*)

The two centres appeal to rather different age groups, Brent Cross attracting an older clientele than Wood Green, a point confirmed in the 1988 and 1992 Brent Cross and Wood Green surveys referred to above and in interviews with the centre managers Significantly, interviews with management revealed that the current refurbishment and extension of Brent Cross is designed, in part, to increase its appeal to young people in the 20-30 age range

#### *Regional or local?*

Shoppers at both centres appeared to come from quite dispersed locations, as confirmed by computer mapping of their post coded addresses<sup>6</sup> However, more detailed analysis of the post code data analysis indicated that there is a high proportion of shoppers for both shopping centres that come from within the local boroughs, Haringey and Barnet As expected, shoppers at Wood Green were much more 'local' than at Brent Cross with 54.5% coming from the Haringey borough and a 23.8% coming from the immediate area of Wood Green and Tottenham Quite a high

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<sup>6</sup> The analysis was undertaken by Steve Wise on ARC-INFO at Sheffield University

percentage of Brent Cross shoppers came from Barnet (47.7%), but the geographic spread of these shoppers was more dispersed with 9.5% of shoppers coming from Hendon, 7.6% from Golders Green and 12.4% from Cricklewood

Brent Cross was established as Britain's first regional, 'out-of-town' centre, catering mainly to comparative shopping in the fashion retail sector (Bromley & Thomas, 1993a). Wood Green, by contrast, was designed to serve a more local demand for convenience shopping. The extent to which Brent Cross has come to act as a 'local' centre was therefore relatively unexpected. In fact, more people shop in Brent Cross on a daily basis (almost 9%) than in Wood Green (just over 7%), suggesting that the Centre has now become a regular part of many north Londoners' daily routine rather than a place to be visited only for special purchases. The age and gender breakdown for these frequent shoppers is also interesting, with more men (especially older men) who shop on a daily basis than women (see *Table 4*). These figures are supported by people's perceptions of the two centres with almost exactly the same proportion of people describing the two centres as 'local' (43.5% at Brent Cross, 43.7% at Wood Green). These findings raise interesting questions about the 'maturing' of shopping centres and suggest that further research is needed on the 'life-history' of Brent Cross and other well-established centres.

#### *Ethnicity and religion*

As was anticipated from their location, there was a higher proportion of Jewish shoppers at Brent Cross and a higher proportion of Muslims at Wood Green. Wood Green attracted a lower proportion of white people than Brent Cross, with more Indians at Brent Cross and more Pakistanis at Wood Green (see *Table 5*). There was a similar proportion of Greek Cypriots at each centre but more Turkish people among the Wood Green sample. Our survey data also suggest a declining proportion of white shoppers at Wood Green Shopping City since the 1992 survey and an increase in percentage of Black Africans. The survey data are broadly similar to those reported in the 1991 Census for the areas surrounding the two centres, however the number of

white shoppers interviewed at Wood Green is lower than the population resident in Haringey (67% compared to 71%)

### *Social class and cultural capital*

We knew from the locations and the types of shops in the two centres that there would be social differences between shoppers at Brent Cross and Wood Green Shopping City. We decided to investigate the nature of these differences further using a variety of indicators concerning income, occupation, housing tenure, education and newspaper readership. This approach draws on conventional measures of social class (as reviewed by Crompton, 1993) and on Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' where he argues that differences in family background, socialisation, education and 'taste' serve as markers of social distinctions between people (Bourdieu, 1984, Savage et al., 1992). Contrary to our expectations, shoppers at Wood Green and Brent Cross did not differ dramatically in terms of social class defined by occupation. While there were twice as many employers and managers at Brent Cross as in Wood Green, the proportion of professional workers was very similar (see *Table 6*). Both centres attract shoppers from across the range of social classes and there is little evidence that either Brent Cross or Wood Green are guilty of the kind of 'social exclusion' (of older and poorer consumers, for example, or those without access to a car), an accusation which has been levelled at other 'out-of-town' centres (e.g. Bromley & Thomas, 1993b) and which has recently been challenged (Williams, 1996). While both centres attract lower middle and upper working class shoppers, it would appear that Wood Green attracts more skilled manual workers and Brent Cross attracts more junior non-manual workers. The difference is less pronounced among the upper middle classes than might have been expected from previous research on the two centres. On an average Saturday in 1988, for example, 70% of Brent Cross's customers were from classes A, B and C1. Customers from classes C2, D and E were a small minority. The higher percentage of junior non manual workers in our survey might suggest that Brent Cross is moving downmarket, an issue that was confirmed in interviews with the centre.

manager. In the 1992 survey of Wood Green, 9% of respondents were classified as being of professional and managerial status, 62% were from social classes C1/C2.

Other measures of social class suggest more pronounced differences. For example, there is a striking difference between the two centres in terms of the number of owner occupiers: 40% of shoppers at Wood Green owned their own homes compared to 67% at Brent Cross. In terms of household income, Brent Cross shoppers far outstripped those in Wood Green (with 12% reporting household incomes in excess of £25,000 compared to less than 6% in Wood Green). Figures for personal income showed similar disparities (see *Table 7*). The proportion unemployed is much higher in Wood Green (5.6%) than in Brent Cross (1.7%) and this difference is accounted for by the high numbers of unemployed in Haringey Borough. Similarly, a higher proportion of Brent Cross shoppers reported having credit, switch or store cards (58%) compared to those at Wood Green (45%).

In terms of educational background, the two centres are broadly comparable with a slightly higher proportion with no educational qualifications at Wood Green than at Brent Cross, but also a slightly higher proportion with higher degrees (which may be a consequence of gentrification in the Wood Green area). In terms of newspaper readership, there was a higher proportion of Sun readers at Wood Green than at Brent Cross, a higher proportion of Daily Mail readers in Wood Green and a higher proportion of Telegraph and Times readers at Brent Cross (see *Table 8*).

The differences in occupational groupings, personal income, education, housing tenure and newspaper readership at the centres, suggest that people who shop at the centres do not fit into neat class categories. Whilst the figures for owner occupation at Wood Green are 20% lower than those for Brent Cross, educational qualifications of people who shopped at the centres were roughly similar. Our results confirm other recent research which suggests that the 'markers' which define class boundaries are becoming more blurred and the data expose the limits of the parameters which we use to differentiate and group people. Social identity has become more mixed and

fragmented and it is increasingly difficult to classify people using traditional typologies of class and social differentiation (cf Lunt & Livingstone, 1992)

### *Image and identity*

While the data on social class differences among consumers at the two centres are relatively muted, responses to more qualitative and open-ended questions suggest that there are more marked differences in terms of the 'image' of the centres with respondents drawing attention to perceived differences in terms of class, wealth and affluence as conveyed by the centres' ethos and clientele (see *Table 9*) Of those who stated a difference between the centres, the most common response was from Wood Green shoppers who felt that people who went to Brent Cross were more wealthy, rich or affluent (20.2%) The most common response from Brent Cross shoppers was also about their relative affluence or wealth compared to those who shopped at Wood Green, although in this case the percentage was much lower (14.4%) The second most frequently stated difference between the centres was in terms of social class, with 9.9% of Wood Green shoppers saying that Brent Cross was a more 'classy', more upper class or more middle class place Apart from these differences, however, there were many broad similarities in terms of the words most frequently used to describe the two centres Neither was thought to be 'soulless', 'alienating', 'intimidating' or 'unsafe' (mentioned by fewer than 10% of respondents in each case) But over 20% of Brent Cross shoppers thought the centre was expensive as compared to only 9% at Wood Green The most common words used to describe the centres were 'convenient' (almost 70% in each case), 'modern' (around 45%), 'attractive' (33% in Wood Green, 43% in Brent Cross) and 'enjoyable' (32% in Wood Green, 38% in Brent Cross) The downside to 'convenient' (easy parking, climate-controlled environment, everything under one roof) is the perceived 'artificial' nature of the centres, mentioned by relatively few respondents in the survey (1.9% in Wood Green, 9.5% in Brent Cross) but a major theme in the focus group discussions where participants regularly

complained about the lack of fresh air and natural light, the sense of being cut off from nature and a general feeling of claustrophobia

### *Safety and security*

The issue of safety and security came up in the focus groups and in the survey responses. More people described Brent Cross as 'safe' than was the case in Wood Green (42% compared to 25%), reflecting a spate of well-publicised crimes in the Wood Green area ("Police Hurt in Stabbing", *Independent* 31 March 1992, "Man Dies After Attacking Thief", *Guardian* 19 April 1994, "Gang Kick Victim to the Ground", *Haringey Independent*, 8 July 1994, "Mad Arsonist Strikes Twice", *Haringey Advertiser* 13 July 1994). The role of the local and national media in spreading fear of crime deserves further exploration (cf Smith, 1985). Meanwhile, the focus groups and interviews with staff at the centres shed fresh light on the issue. Safety and security were key issues for the management at both centres and the subject of frequent discussion in the focus groups. At Brent Cross, however, a very high profile approach was taken to the issue with surveillance cameras much in evidence and security staff in police-style uniforms. A more low-profile approach was taken in Wood Green, with security cameras much less visible and security staff dressed in uniforms that clearly distinguished them from the police. In interview, the centre managers recognised the distinction and the way it reflected the class and ethnic character of the two centres.

### *'Family shopping'*

One of the most surprising results of the survey was the number of people who said they preferred to shop either on their own, with another individual or with a group of friends rather than with their families. About 70% of all respondents at both centres preferred shopping on their own or with a friend or a group of friends. Less than 2% at either centre claimed to enjoy shopping with their spouse and children. This is despite 17% of Wood Green respondents and 15% of the Brent Cross sample having dependent children. These results were confirmed by the responses to a question regarding social practices (as opposed to preferences). 65% of people at Wood Green and 68% of those at Brent Cross shopped mostly on their own. 16% of people at Wood Green and 11% at Brent Cross shopped with a friend and less than 5% shopped

with family or children at either centre. These figures may reflect the problems of interviewing parents with small children and they do not deny the fact that women are often shopping for other family members. But even our observational data bear out the popularity of shopping individually or with friends (see *Table 10*). Focus group discussions with mother and toddler groups also confirm that there was little pleasure in shopping with small children and a focus group with teenagers in Wood Green similarly found that teenagers rarely enjoyed shopping with their parents. However, working class mothers who shopped at Brent Cross complained strongly that the centre did not cater adequately for families and they stated this as a reason for not shopping there more frequently. In general, people preferred to shop on their own (over 30% for men and women at both centres), while women were more likely than men to prefer shopping with friends.

These findings run counter to the emphasis placed by both centre managers on 'family shopping' as a key element of their marketing strategy. During interviews at Brent Cross and Wood Green, both managers claimed to provide a 'family environment', emphasising 'family values' and catering to the needs of everyone but above all those of families. We suggest that this apparent contradiction points to the metaphorical function of the 'family' in the centres' marketing strategies. References to shopping centres as 'family' environments serve as a kind of shorthand for the kind of ambiance that shopping centre managers are trying to create. An emphasis on 'family values' creates the right place-image even if, in practice, relatively few people actually shop as families and those who do so rarely enjoy the experience. Despite the oft-reported 'crisis' of the contemporary family (McRobbie, 1994), the word still serves as a powerful and effective metaphor of social cohesion.

### *Just shopping?*

Our emphasis throughout this project has been on the neglected social dimensions of shopping. We argue that shopping involves much more than a simple act of monetary exchange, extending 'backwards' into the social relations of production and 'forwards'

into cycles of use and re-use where commodities take on new meanings depending on how they are incorporated into different social and domestic contexts. We explore these issues in more depth in our focus group and ethnographic work. Here, however, we wish to report some simple evidence which supports this emphasis on the social nature of shopping. For example, over 20% of respondents at both centres had visited a cafe or restaurant and a similar proportion had sat down whilst in the centre (21% in Wood Green, 30% in Brent Cross). More than 10% at each centre had met up with family or friends. 12% had recognised someone they knew and over 14% had talked to someone (besides shop assistants or security guards). More than half of the respondents had been window-shopping (65% at Wood Green, 52% at Brent Cross), over 60% had enjoyed browsing and more than 10% had watched other people passing by (13% in Wood Green, 17% at Brent Cross). These results support recent suggestions that the act of looking may be as important as the act of buying for some shoppers, confirming the validity of 'looking' as a key metaphor for contemporary consumption (Bowly, 1985, Moore, 1991, Woolf, 1990). These findings are also consistent with recent North American studies which indicate that shopping malls are social places where people go to browse and meet up with friends (Prus & Dawson, 1991, Fenberg et al., 1989) as well as simply to shop.

### **Conclusions**

As other critics have pointed out, the literature on contemporary consumption is dominated by studies of 'heroic' consumption at 'spectacular' sites such as mega-malls, world's fairs and expositions (Pred, 1991, Shields, 1992, Ley & Olds, 1988). This literature has tended to under-estimate the role of ordinary consumers as knowing, active subjects (cf Jackson & Holbrook, 1995). It has tended to ignore or oversimplify the highly gendered nature of consumption as a social practice and to infer the meaning of consumption spaces from semiotic rather than ethnographic analysis. Here, we have addressed some of these perceived deficiencies, using the results of a social

survey at two north London shopping centres in order to interrogate some of the assumptions and preconceptions of the current literature

We have shown that shopping is an intensely social activity that involves far more than the simple purchase of goods. We have argued that 'family shopping' serves as a metaphor for the kind of image that centre owners and managers are trying to create rather than an actual social practice engaged in by many ordinary consumers. Rather than treating shopping malls as 'cathedrals' of modern consumption or as wonders of the postmodern world, our results suggest that they may be better understood for their convenience, mundane rather than sacred spaces. Far from 'spectacular', our two centres have come to be regarded by many people as a very ordinary part of their everyday lives. Brent Cross, which was once viewed as a fairly spectacular place, Britain's first purpose-built regional shopping centre on the North American model, has over time become a relatively ordinary and local centre. A similar process of maturation seems to be occurring in other areas of Britain where more recently built and larger shopping malls have been located. Places like Meadowhall outside Sheffield and the Gateshead Metro Centre are often accused of drawing people away from the city centre rather than pulling in shoppers from a wider geographic area. This suggests that despite planners' intentions, there is a tendency towards localisation over time which may exacerbate their effects on town centres and inner cities (Howard, 1993, Howard & Davies, 1993)

The lack of stark differences in the customer profiles of our two centres may underlie the emphasis on style and image that is such a key part of the marketing of contemporary consumption places. As Meaghan Morris (1988) argued some years ago, shopping centres are striving to create at least an illusion of uniqueness and a distinctive sense of place in a world that is becoming increasingly homogeneous. Similarly, contemporary consumers are constructing their identities through a whole range of social practices and cultural distinctions. Our data on social class and cultural capital highlight the increasing difficulty of placing people within clear categories, confirming the increasingly fragmented nature of personal and social identities

Combining our survey results on the social milieu of two north London shopping centres with the findings of focus group and ethnographic research, we hope in due course to be able to provide a more rounded picture of the diverse contexts in which the relationship between consumption and identity is being forged

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**Table 1:**  
**Selected social indicators for residents in Haringey, Barnet and Greater London**

	Haringey	Barnet	GLC
Percentage of Employers and Managers	16.8	23.0	18.1
Percentage in Receipt of Income Support	19.9	8.4	12.3
Percent Owner Occupier	68.9	49.8	57.2
Percent Council House Rented	24.9	12.8	23.3
Percent Privately Rented	25.4	18.3	19.5
Percentage Non-White	29.0	18.4	20.2

source 1991 Census (Greater London) and  
 Greater London Abstract of Statistics (1993)

**Table 2:**  
**Travel to Brent Cross and Wood Green shopping centres**

	Wood Green	Brent Cross	
Percentage			
Non-response	0.0	0.3	
Bus	52.1	72.7	
Car	18.5	21.0	
Underground	12.9	3.5	
Foot	13.6	1.9	
Other	2.8	0.6	
n =	286	315	(N = 601)

source survey results

**Table 3:**  
**Duration of visit to Brent Cross and Wood Green shopping centres**

	Wood Green	Brent Cross
mean (in minutes)	62.2	81.1
standard deviation	50.2	50.7
percentage of respondents spending		
< 30 mins	41.5	21.8
30-59 mins	27.3	29.4
1-2 hours	23.8	35.9
> 2 hours	7.5	12.8

source survey results

**Table 4: Frequency of visits to Brent Cross and Wood Green shopping centres by gender**

Percentage visiting	Wood Green		Brent Cross	
	men	women	men	women
daily	8.0	5.9	11.2	9.9
> once/week	22.1	21.6	13.5	16.8
weekly	19.9	29.7	13.5	20.8
> once/month	19.9	20.0	13.5	22.8
< once/month	12.4	11.4	14.6	14.9

source                      survey results

**Table 5: Ethnicity and religion of respondents**

	Wood Green	Brent Cross
<b>Ethnicity (%)</b>		
White	66.8	78.4
Black African	8.7	4.4
Black Caribbean	5.6	3.2
Indian	4.9	6.0
Pakistani	1.7	0.3
Bangladeshi	0.7	0.6
Greek/Cypriot	2.1	1.6
Turkish	3.1	1.3
<b>Religion (%)</b>		
No religion/non-response	33.8	32.7
Anglican/CofE	25.5	25.4
Catholic/RC	12.8	11.9
Hindu	3.5	4.1
Muslim/Islam	6.9	3.2
Jewish	3.1	14.0

source                      survey results

**Table 6. Occupation of respondents**

Percentage	Wood Green	Brent Cross
employers and managers	2 3	5 4
professional, self-employed	1 4	0 6
professional, employee	3 8	5 1
intermediate, non-manual	5 6	7 0
junior, non-manual	5 6	14 0
skilled manual	6 3	1 9
semi-skilled manual	1 7	0 6
housewife	7 0	7 3
student	22 7	21 3
retired	14 0	16 8
unemployed	5 6	1 6

source                      survey results

**Table 7: Household and personal income of respondents**

	Wood Green	Brent Cross
household income		
non-response/don't know	50 0	50 8
no income	17 8	15 9
< £10,000	12 2	5 4
£10,000-25,000	13 2	14 9
> £25,000	5 6	12 2
personal income		
non-response/don't know	9 1	13 3
no income	18 9	19 7
< £10,000	48 6	35 6
£10,000-25,000	22 6	25 4
> £25,000	1 6	5 1

source                      survey results

**Table 8: Newspaper readership**

	Wood Green	Brent Cross
Percentage reading		
Sun	22.4	17.8
Daily Mirror	17.1	13.3
Daily Mail	13.3	10.2
Guardian	11.2	12.4
Daily Express	5.9	7.0
Independent	5.6	6.0
Times	5.2	12.1
Daily Telegraph	3.5	6.3
Today	2.4	1.6
source	survey results	

**Table 9: Words used to describe the shopping centres**

	Wood Green	Brent Cross
Percentage describing centres as		
convenient	66.8	69.5
modern	45.1	44.1
local	43.7	43.5
attractive	32.5	42.9
enjoyable	32.2	38.1
familiar	30.8	38.4
safe	24.8	41.6
expensive	8.8	21.0
soulless	7.7	5.1
unsafe	3.8	0.0
intimidating	2.8	1.6
alienating	2.4	2.2
artificial	11.9	9.5
source	survey results	

**Table 10: Pedestrian counts**

	Wood Green	Brent Cross
Percentage shopping		
as individuals	39.0	36.7
with friends	52.1	52.7
with family	8.3	10.6
source	personal observation	

## ESRC Consumption and Identity Project: Survey Questionnaire

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening Can you spare some time to complete a questionnaire for an academic research project on shopping in Brent Cross Shopping Centre and Wood Green Shopping City? This survey is part of a larger project which examines the social use of the shopping centres and and people's attitudes towards shopping The details given will be confidential

### A Your Visit to the Shopping Centre Today

(1) How did you travel to the centre today? Bus  Car  Tube  Foot  Other \_\_\_\_\_

(2) How much roughly have you spent whilst shopping in the centre today?  
Amount (approx ) \_\_\_\_\_ No money spent

(3) Which of the following activities did you do whilst in the Centre? (*Show card A*)

Window Shopping (outside shops)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Browsing (Inside Shops)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Met up with family/friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	Recognised someone you know	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visited cafe/restaurant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sat down in Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looked for bargains/sale items	<input type="checkbox"/>	Returned faulty/unwanted items	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talked to somebody you know	<input type="checkbox"/>	Watched other people passing by	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talked to shop employee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Talked to security guard	<input type="checkbox"/>

Have you done any other type of activity other than those listed on Card A?

---

(4) How much time did you spend in the Shopping Centre today? (*Hours/Mins*) \_\_\_\_\_

### B Perceptions of Wood Green and Brent Cross Shopping Centres

(1) How often do you visit the shopping centre?

Every day  More than once a week  Once a week  More than once a month   
Less than once a month  Other \_\_\_\_\_

(2) Please could you rank the following areas of Wood Green in the order of most visited Most visited=1 and so on (*Show Card A, state Non-applicable if not visited*)

(Wood Green Shoppers only)

	Rank	N/A
Wood Green Shopping City	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood Green Market (inside shopping city)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood Green High St	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood Green Market(near tube)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(3) When was the last time that you shopped at Wood Green? (*BC shoppers*) Brent Cross (*WG Shoppers*)

---

- (4) Please state where you shop for the following items  
 ( State shop or shopping area and location WG= Wood Green BC= Brent Cross, or state non-applicable N/A)
- (a) Food \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) Clothes and Shoes \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) Furniture and Carpets \_\_\_\_\_
  - (d) Electrical Goods \_\_\_\_\_
  - (e) Books and Stationery \_\_\_\_\_
  - (f) DIY, Household decoration \_\_\_\_\_
  - (g) Children's Toys \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) Do you think there is a difference between the types of people who shop at Wood Green and Brent Cross? Yes  No  Don't Know   
 If answer yes What do you think is the difference between Brent Cross and Wood Green Shoppers?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- (6) Which of these words would you use to describe this shopping centre? (Show card A)
- |            |                          |          |                          |              |                          |            |                          |
|------------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Attractive | <input type="checkbox"/> | Soulless | <input type="checkbox"/> | Local        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Alienating | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Big        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Easy     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Intimidating | <input type="checkbox"/> | Convenient | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Safe       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Familiar | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsafe       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Modern     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Expensive  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lively   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Artificial   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Enjoyable  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
- Are there any other words you would use? \_\_\_\_\_

- (7) What do you like/dislike about this shopping centre?
- |      |                                    |         |                                    |
|------|------------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|
| Like | Dont know <input type="checkbox"/> | Dislike | Dont know <input type="checkbox"/> |
|------|------------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|
- \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- (8) What do you think is different about shopping on a High St and shopping in this centre? Dont know
- \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**C Attitudes towards Shopping**

- (1) What do you like and dislike about going shopping?
- |      |                                    |         |                                    |
|------|------------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|
| Like | Dont know <input type="checkbox"/> | Dislike | Dont know <input type="checkbox"/> |
|------|------------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|
- \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- (2) Who do you enjoy shopping with, if anyone? \_\_\_\_\_

- (3) Who does most of the food shopping in your family or household?  
 Respondent (*lives on own*) [ ] Respondent (*shops for rest of family/household*) [ ]  
 Shared Activity (*provide further details*) [ ] \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other person in family/household (*provide further details*) [ ] \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) Please rank how often you shop with the following types of people (1 equals most often)(*Show card A*)
- |                                       | Rank | N/A |
|---------------------------------------|------|-----|
| On your own                           | [ ]  | [ ] |
| With a friend                         | [ ]  | [ ] |
| With a group of friends               | [ ]  | [ ] |
| With boyfriend/girlfriend             | [ ]  | [ ] |
| With your spouse or partner           | [ ]  | [ ] |
| With your children                    | [ ]  | [ ] |
| With your spouse/partner and children | [ ]  | [ ] |
| With parents                          | [ ]  | [ ] |

**D Your Lifestyle**

- (1) Which National paper do you normally read?  
 Does not read daily newspaper [ ] Papers Daily Express [ ] Daily Mirror [ ] Sun [ ] Today [ ]  
 Times [ ] Telegraph [ ] Guardian [ ] Independent [ ] Daily Mail [ ] Other [ ] \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) How often have you been out in the last week for a social activity like visiting a friend or relative, going to the pub or a restaurant, museum, cinema, theatre etc (not including shopping) \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) What kinds of activities do you do in your leisure time? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) Do you have store/credit/switch cards? Yes [ ] No [ ] which cards do you have? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**E Background Information**

- (1) What is your age? Under16[ ]16-20[ ]21-30[ ]31-40[ ]41-50[ ]51-60[ ]61-70[ ]70+[ ]
- (2) What is your Occupation (*if OAP or unemployed also state previous occupation, if housewife state previous occupation and spouse's occupation*)  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) Do you have a religion? Yes [ ] No [ ] If yes, what is your religion? \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) Where do you live? (*District and full postcode*) \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) What is your highest education qualification?  
 O Levels/GCSE's [ ] A Levels/BTEC OND [ ] Degree/BTEC HND [ ] Higher Degree [ ]  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

- (6) Which of these categories indicate your ethnic origin? (*Show Card A*)  
 White  Black/Caribbean  Black/African  Black/Other  Chinese   
 Indian  Pakistani  Bangladeshi  Greek/Cypriot  Turkish  Other \_\_\_\_\_
- (7) Who lives with you in your household?  
*Married/Cohabiting Couple*  
 No Children  One or more dependent children  with non-dependent children   
*Lives with Parents*  
 Dependent on parents  Non-dependent   
*Lone parent*  
 One or more dependent children  with non-dependent children   
*One person*  
 Under pensionable age  Over pensionable age   
 Two or more people unrelated
- (8) In what kind of property do you live?  
 Owner Occupier   
 Local Authority/Housing Association   
 Privately Rented   
 Other \_\_\_\_\_
- (9) What was your personal and household income for the last year? (1993) (*show Card A*)  
*Personal Income*  
 No personal income  under £5,000  £5,000-£10,000  £10,000-£15,000   
 £15,000-£20,000  £20,000-£25,000  £25,000-£30,000  £30,00-£40,000   
 £40,000-£50,000  £50,000-£75,000  £75,000-£100,000  Over £100,000   
*Household Income.*  
 No household income  under £5,000  £5,000-£10,000  £10,000-£15,000   
 £15,000-£20,000  £20,000-£25,000  £25,000-£30,000  £30,00-£40,000   
 £40,000-£50,000  £50,000-£75,000  £75,000-£100,000  Over £100,000

**F Taking it Further** (*At interviewer's discretion*)

As part of our larger research project we are recruiting people for focus group research. If you are interested we will need further personal details. This information will be confidential.

If you are interested in participating in further research please give name, and telephone number  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**G To be completed by Interviewer**

(i) Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ (ii) Shopping Centre Brent Cross  Wood Green   
 (iii) Day M T W T F S (iv) Time \_\_\_\_\_ (v) Sex M/F (vi) On own  In group  (vii) Exit \_\_\_\_\_

Observations \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Codes for Consumption and Identity Questionnaire

The coding detailed is in the order of data inputted on spreadsheet. The order of the data, on the whole, follows the sequence on the questionnaire, except section G is included at the beginning of spreadsheet and also there is occasional recoding of questionnaire data. Where this has occurred, the recoded data has been added next to the original section.

### **Section G To be completed by Interviewer**

casnum	number of questionnaire
date	date
shcent	shopping centre WG= Wood Green, BC=Brent Cross
day	day of interview
sex	sex f=female m=male
sex1	sex female=1, male=2
group	In group or on own 1=on own, 2= in group
Exit	exit at shopping centre M&S= Marks and Spencers at Brent Cross (main bus entrance), Waitrose=Waitrose at Brent Cross (car park entrance upstairs), R&B=Russell and Bromley at Brent Cross (car park entrance upstairs) Dash=main pedestrian entrance at Wood Green, Buyrite=Mr Buyrite at Wood Green (side entrance), WHS=WH Smiths (side entrance on other side of the road)

### **Section A Your visit to the Shopping Centre Today**

- 1 Travel Car=1, Bus=2, Tube=3, Foot=4, Other=5
- 2 Amount pounds spent
- 3 Words used to describe shopping centre (1=chosen, 0=not chosen)

winshop	window shopping
brows	browsing
friend	talked to friend
recknow	recognised somebody you know
cafre	visited cafe or restaurant
lookbarg	looked for bargains
retfaul	returned faulty goods
talknow	talked to somebody you know
watpass	watched people pass by
talkshop	talked to shop assistant
talksec	talked to security guard

otheract activity written on spreadsheet

4a Time2 time spent at shopping centre in minutes

- 4b T3 Time spent in shopping centre according to time bands  
 1=up to 30 minutes  
 2=up to one hour  
 3=1 and a half hours  
 4=up to 2 hours  
 5=up to 3 hours  
 6=up to 4 hours  
 7=up to 5 hours

**Section B Perceptions of Wood Green and Brent Cross Shopping Centre**

- 1 Offshop frequency of visit to shopping centre 1=Every day, 2=more than once a week, 3=once a week, 4=more than once a month, 5=less than once a month, 6=other

- 2 Rank areas of Wood Green most visited

wgshop wood green shopping city  
 wgmar wood green market  
 wghigh wood green high st  
 wgtube wood green tube station

- 3 When was the last time you visited wood green/brent cross (written)

ltwg last time visited wood green  
 ltbc last time visited brent cross

never Separate coding next to this for number of people that never visited Wood Green and numbers people that never visited Brent Cross

- 4 Please state where you shop for the following items (see attached code sheet for locations)

food food shopping  
 closh clothes and shoes  
 furn furniture and carpets  
 elgood electrical goods  
 book books and stationery  
 DIY Do it Yourself  
 Toy Toys

- 5 Difwgbc do you think there is a difference between the types of people who shop at wood green and brent cross 1=Yes, 2=no, 3= don't know

6 Words used to describe shopping centre (1=chosen 0=not chosen)

attrac	attractive
soull	soulless
local	local
alien	alienating
big	big
easy	easy
intim	intimidating
conven	convenient
safe	safe
familiar	familiar
unsafe	unsafe
modern	modern
expens	expensive
live	lively
artif	artificial
enjoyab	enjoyable
othword	other word, written

7a Likecen what do you like about the shopping centre 1= response 2=non response

7b Discen what do you dislike about the shopping centre 1= non response, 2= non response

8 Highst what do you think is different about shopping on a high st and shopping at the centre 1= response 2=non response

**Section C Attitudes Towards Shopping**

1 Likshop what do you like about shopping 1=response, 2=non response

2 enjshop who do you enjoy shopping with (not coded in order reported)

Friend=1  
Friends=2  
Spouse=3  
Children=4  
Spouse and children=5  
parents=6  
other=7  
on own=8  
boyfriend/girlfriend=9

3 Foodshop who does food shopping in your household 1=Respondent lives on own, 2=respondent shops for the rest of the family, 3=shared activity 4= other person in family or household

4 Rank who you prefer shopping with (1=most shopped with and so on)

own	on own
friend	with a friend
group	with a group of friends
boygirl	with a boyfriend or girlfriend
child	with your children
family	with your family
parent	with your parents

**Section D Your lifestyle**

1 Natpap National paper read 1= does not read daily newspaper, 2=daily express, 3=daily mirror, 4=sun, 5=today, 6=times, 7=telegraph, 8=guardian, 9=independent, 10=daily mail, 11=other

2 Out how many times out in the last week

3 Leisact yes =1 no=2

4a Cards yes=1 no=2

4b tycard number of cards

**Section E Background Information**

1 Age 1=under 16, 2=16-20, 3=21-30, 3=31-40, 4=41-50, 5=51-60, 6=61-70  
7=70+

2 Occupation written occupation

3 Class code-based on OPCS census definition of Socio-Economic Group

- 1 1 Employers large establishments and central and local govt )
- 1 2 Managers large establishments and central and local govt )
- 2 1 Employers small establishments
- 2 2 Managers small establishments
- 3 Professional workers self-employed
- 4 Professional workers employees
- 5 Intermediate non-manual workers
- 5 1 Ancillary workers and artists
- 5 2 Foremen and supervisors
- 6 Junior non-manual workers
- 7 Personal service workers
- 8 Foremen and supervisors manual
- 9 Skilled manual workers
- 10 Semi-skilled manual workers
- 11 Unskilled manual workers
- 12 Own account workers (other than professional

13 Housinc Household Income for the last year (1993)  
Under £5,000=1, £5,000-£10,000=2, £10,000-£15,000=3 £15,000-  
£20,000=4, £20,000-£25,000=5, £25,000-£30,000=6, £30,000-  
£40,000= 7, £40,000-£50,000=8, £50,000-£75,000=9, £75,000-  
£100,000=10, Over £100,000=11

14 Foc Agreement to participate in a focus group, yes=1, no=0

## Codes for Places in Questionnaire

bas=basingstoke	abr=abroad	rom=romford
crouh=crouch hill	ag=amos grove	mor=morocco
manc=Manchester	bak=bakers arms	gib=gibraltar
harl=harlsden	cam=Camden	bg=bounds green
St Al=St albans	chat=Colney Hatch	be=bridge end
WG=Wood Green	chel=cheltenham	s wood=s woodford
EN=Enfield	coln=colney hatch lane	act=acton
watf=watford	cri=Cricklewood	br=bromley
god=godalming	cum=cumbria	oakwood=oak
SS=Seven Sisters	dar=Darlington	bark=barking
hert=herts	del=delivered	clac=clacton
hol=Holloway	ea=ealing	buck=buckhurst hill
dev=devon	edg=Edgware	gal=the galleria
tuf=tufnell park	edm=Edmonton	nlon=north london
WE=West End	EV=Everywhere	ss=seven sisters
tot=Tottenham	fr=friends	T for=temple fortune
bar=Barnet	GG=Golders Green	mih=mill hill
bn=brighton	ham=Hampstead	lee=lee valley
PG=Palmers Green	har=Haringey	cata=catalogue
har=Harrow	hav=Haverstock	bec=beckenham
sto=Stoke Newington	hens=Hensbury	ncir=north circular
stam=Stamford Hill	hol=Holloway Road	camb=cambridge
SWC=Swiss Cottage	hor=hornsey	hox=hoxton
widg=Widgemore Hill	il=ilford	ar=airports
sou=southgate	kil=Kilburn	str=stratford
Al=Alperton	lake=Lakeside, Thurrock	suf=suffolk
BP=Brent Park	lin inn=Lincolns Inn	pet=petticoat lane
PE=Pointers End	MH=Muswell Hill (also MUS)	hh=hemel hempstead
BO=Burnt Oak	mil=milnsden	kin=kingsbury
wat=Watford	nea=Neasden	cat=catford
lew=lewisham	NH=Notting Hill	ce=crouch end
EB=Electricity Board	pb=potters bar	burn=burnt oak
IL=Ilford	perry=perryvale	cambe=camberley
beth=bethnal green	pond=ponders end	high=highbury
park=park royal	scot=scotland	harw=harrow weald
mark=markets	sou=Southgate	muni=middlesex uni
hough=houghton	st ann=St Annes	bur=bury st edmunds

