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## BROKERS AND SYMBOLS IN AMERICAN URBAN LIFE

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*This paper strives for an understanding of an urban system as a whole through an investigation of the role of esthetic expression in everyday life. The research was carried out in New York in 1971 on behalf of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Three ideas are put forward: 1) the usefulness of a neo-Redfield model understanding the cultural and social processes of the city; 2) the importance of esthetic expression as an aspect of human relations, one whose social significance is closely related to the symbolization of collective and personal identities; and 3) the usefulness of the notion of "cultural broker" as a key role in urban social and cultural processes.*

"If we are to understand the ethical rules of a society it is aesthetics that we must study".

E. R. Leach

POLITICAL SYSTEMS OF HIGHLAND BURMA

American cities have baffled anthropological research. Research has been done *in* American cities, but rarely *on* them. Rather than coming to grips with the structure of the city as a whole, most researchers have tended to seek out isolated subsections of urban life such as institutions or ethnic enclaves. The result has often been fine, detailed studies of a sort where the urban context becomes increasingly incidental; but the challenge of understanding the city as a whole has been bypassed, as is shown by the neglect of the example set by W. Lloyd Warner's "Yankee City" series. The challenge to anthropology with its holistic claims is to develop an understanding of the macrocosm of the city and the nation within which people live out their lives. Such an understanding of the form and structure of a city would serve as a framework for most of the microcosmic studies of urban anthropology so far. The most direct path to such an understanding is to seek out the connecting links, both behavioral and cultural, human and symbolic, which serve to hold together multifarious

segments of the urban system. This paper suggests a method whereby the total urban system can be approached through an analysis of symbols and the ways in which they are used to separate and join individuals and groups.

The point of departure is a research project carried out in New York City in the Spring of 1971 on the role of the arts in everyday life in four communities in New York City and environs.<sup>2</sup> The theoretical and intellectual background for analyzing the urban process as a systematic whole was developed as the basis for this study and for some of the preliminary conclusions. The focus is on the role of the arts and of specialists in the arts.<sup>3</sup> The conclusions center around two notions: 1) that people's involvement in the arts is an aspect of their use of cultural symbols to establish boundaries around, or links between, ethnic groups, classes and generations; and 2) that "brokers" play a significant role in the exchange of forms and techniques between the different American urban cultural traditions, and notably between what

may be described as the great, popular and folk levels of tradition.

It should be clear that people everywhere have ways of expressing themselves esthetically, whether the medium be dramatic, musical, graphic, verbal, culinary, sportive, literary, or other. Art must be seen as an *aspect* of communication, and thus different communities may favor one esthetic code over another. Where one group of people may place a great deal of emphasis on music or dance, another may stress verbal behavior, and a third, plastic arts or cooking. If art is an aspect of communication, then it is clearly a vehicle of social relations, for it may be used to establish group boundaries, to grant or symbolize personal statuses and to solidify interpersonal relations through common or reciprocal experiences.

*The great, popular and folk traditions in American urban life*

In our study we postulated that American society is characterized by a single cultural system. By this we did not mean that there is a common content or form throughout, but rather that the various cultural patterns<sup>4</sup> are linked together by a process of intercommunication. Any cultural pattern, in other words, evolves in a context of knowledge of other patterns. American complexity can perhaps be approached by noting the interplay among three levels of tradition to which cultural patterns can be assigned: i.e., folk traditions, popular traditions, and great traditions. All these notions are, of course, analytic constructs which are heuristically useful if they help to interpret behavior and attitudes; they are not real "things." The cultural patterns and traditions or levels are defined by the amount and kind of communication within and between them as well as by the degree of role specialization within each. Each cultural pattern has its own internal dynamics and is in dialectical interaction with the others.

These ideas of course derived from the work of Robert Redfield and from that of Milton Singer (Redfield 1953; Redfield and Singer 1954; Singer 1972), which is particularly derived from his observations in India. In order to apply the distinction between Great Tradition and Little Tradition to American society, we have necessarily had to modify them to the point where their resemblance to the original is no closer than that of grandchild to grandparent. In particular, note that in our definition the key relationships are between persons rather than between cultural forms or ideas. While we have postulated three levels rather than two,<sup>5</sup> we have retained the notions of communication and borrowing and the interest in "cultural performances" (Singer 1972: 70-73) as the field in which the different cultural influences are worked out through human action and interaction. This initial postulated model worked well enough to give us a framework for understanding and organizing the vast range of cultural and esthetic material in urban life and thus enabled us to develop the analyses summarized below.

By *folk tradition* we mean the cultural patterns that emerge from some fairly localized culture-bearing group, such as a neighborhood, an ethnic category, a generation or a factory workshop. It is based on face-to-face interaction and is of primarily local relevance. A folk tradition comprises the music, poems, jokes, drama, etc. that a given community has because of its historical origins and also because of the constant process of elaboration and invention that occurs everywhere in society.

The *popular tradition* is characterized by those cultural products which are diffused through the mass media, including most professional live entertainment. Performers and audience are assumed not to know each other and only interact (usually at some distance) in the context of a specific performance. Their producers hold that the cultural products are not universal but are geared to a group audience rather than the

individual interaction characteristic of the folk traditions. Thus a cultural pattern at the popular tradition level may form part of the cultural environment of people with quite different local cultural patterns.

The *great tradition* is characterized by American society as of high prestige, being in some sense the pinnacle of artistic and cultural achievement; these forms are held to be universal — "art" rather than "entertainment." There is a fairly general agreement in America as to what the great tradition is, even though some people may glorify it, others may regard it as uninteresting or unobtainable, and still others may reject it utterly on principle. This tradition is based on a division of labor, for it depends on the presence of specialists to elaborate the cultural form. Since it is not possible for everyone to be such a specialist, there will always be a distinction between a great and a folk tradition. The great tradition is not simply the folk tradition of the upper classes, for they are generally not specialists but instead have their own folk tradition based on interpersonal interaction. The great tradition stands apart from identification with any social group, although it is evident that access to its performances and specialized training is differentially organized by social class.

We are, in other words, distinguishing the folk tradition from the popular tradition essentially according to whether the cultural performances are characterized by face-to-face or impersonal relations. We are distinguishing the popular from the great tradition according to whether or not the producers of cultural forms claim universality for them. And we are suggesting that as one moves from folk through popular to the great traditions, the presence of cultural specialists, signifying a division of labor, becomes increasingly important. The folk tradition is hardly conceivable with a division of labor; the great tradition is inconceivable without one; while the situation varies from one extreme to the other in the popular tradition, but with a strong tendency towards specialization. We assume

that these three streams of folk, popular and great traditions are also systematically related and that forms and ideas flow back and forth between them all. It is clear that practitioners of the great tradition are as likely to turn to folk tradition for inspiration as those of the popular tradition.

*The study*

The four communities studied were selected to cover as wide a range as possible. Two were geographically defined and relatively limited in space: an upper middle class suburb here called "Suburbia", and a working class area in the inner city with a largely Italian-American population, here called "Rodney Park." The two other communities were based on very broad ethnic categories, though we attempted to localize them in space: Blacks, mostly in Brooklyn, and Puerto Ricans, mostly in Manhattan.

The four field studies took somewhat different forms, and the results vary accordingly. The study of Suburbia stressed the attitudes and values of adults and teenagers towards the arts, with a secondary theme of retention ethnicity in the suburbs. The study of Rodney Park emphasized the political organization of the community and the role that esthetic expression plays within it. The study of the Black community concentrated on the role of the performer within the community and on the meaning of art for community identity. The Puerto Rican study, based on an analysis of cultural (artistic) performances, tackled the problem of the interrelations between the folk tradition and the popular tradition and underlined how closely intertwined with one culture's patterns a particular art form may be.

The kind of involvement in the arts varied between the four communities. People in Suburbia were very aware of the arts, but essentially restricted their involvement to a consumer role. In Rodney Park esthetic involvement ran largely to presentation of self concerns such as gardening and cooking; what involvement there was in the

performing arts was within a religious or political framework.<sup>6</sup> The level of involvement with the performing arts was quite high in both the Black and the Puerto Rican communities; in both there was a preference for art forms that reflected Black or Puerto Rican experience, though this covers a wide range and there is considerable scope for taste differences under this umbrella. In Puerto Rican and Black performances the proscenium barrier, though present, was less pronounced and there was more audience participation.

The four communities also differed in the degrees of self-consciousness with which they approach their art. The Black community tended to be very aware of the arts, seeing their art as a collective act expressing Black identity and purpose. The people of Suburbia were also extremely self-aware, but in terms of what art meant for them as individuals, for enjoyment or status. The people of Rodney Park were the least self-conscious about their involvement in the arts, for the most part seeing what they were doing as simply part of life and worthy of no special comment. People in the four communities viewed art variously. Art was seen as *relaxation* in Suburbia, especially, though the theme occurred elsewhere. Rodney Parkers mostly defined art as *self-expression*, but with a negative twist: art allows self-expression, which some people appear to fear. Blacks also saw art essentially as self-expression but in the more communal context of relations between audience and artist. Some of the Black artists interviewed argued that by expressing people's problems art helped find solutions to them. Art was also defined by *listing* all its subdivisions: art is music, drama, painting, etc. A final approach was to define art by its *results*, such as "Art is any activity which, when engaged in, ennobles the human spirit."

Interrelations between the three levels of tradition emerged from the four field studies. Among the Puerto Ricans, for instance, the same themes and the same performers move back and forth from one medium to

another, from stage to television to photo-novel and vice versa; the treatment of the theme differs with the medium and thus with the context of communication. An interesting case of interchange was that of efforts towards liturgical reform in Rodney Park Catholic churches. The old mass, with its de-emphasis on popular participation through the use of Latin and the very structure of the ceremony, is giving way to the locally oriented practices recommended by Vatican II. The attempt to involve more people in the ceremony represents a lessening of the great tradition character of the mass (hence, doubtless, much of the opposition to these changes). A few people in the local community were coming forth to work out new forms for the mass, such as the introduction of popular songs<sup>7</sup> and guitar music to create a "folk mass" offered weekly in one of Rodney Park's churches. A process of parochialization (cf. Marriott 1955:199) is occurring here, in the sense that people in the local community are working over and elaborating on an element that is standardized at the great tradition level. A church pageant in a Black Protestant church in Bedford-Stuyvesant used symbols drawn from a variety of great and popular traditions to heighten its worth and convey its messages: it is intriguing to speculate on the cultural significance of the use of symbols from Pharoanic Egypt for a local ceremony while, when all the churches of the same denomination gathered together for an anniversary celebration, the symbols that were used were drawn from American popular culture (floats with pretty girls in evening gowns, etc.).<sup>8</sup> In Suburbia it seemed that there was no folk tradition in the sense of esthetic activity derived from and a part of the relations of daily life.<sup>9</sup> Instead, there was an attempt to bring in elements from the popular and great traditions in whose articulation most people may not participate.

This frame of comparative observations drawn from the four field studies and phrased in terms of the neo-Redfieldian model of three levels of tradition, serves as

background to the two generalizing sections below. In these sections we attempt to move away from a concern with cultural forms in themselves by relating our materials to general theoretical notions concerning the place of symbols and brokers in an understanding of a complex cultural situation such as a city.

### Symbols

Art styles and art tastes are often used as markers of group or individual status. Since art is an aspect of communication, then one way in which the community can be defined is as those who are able to communicate with each other, in other words, who share the same artistic tradition, who express themselves esthetically in the same code.<sup>10</sup> The group that is being set off in this way can be an ethnic group (Blacks, Armenians, etc.), a class group ("we who appreciate . . ."), or a social generation, as when teenagers distinguish their musical tastes from those of their elders in order to express the opposition between generations.<sup>11</sup> The point to be stressed here is that groups have particular esthetic forms which are relatively unappreciated by other groups, and that they value these forms precisely and self-consciously as a way of maintaining their separate identity in the urban context.

In the Black community, people's tastes run largely to music and drama considered representative of the "Black experience." The Black community was extremely self-aware, and the theme that the only proper art for Blacks was one which was derived from and fed back into the Black experience was a leitmotiv throughout the entire study. Two quotes will illustrate this, the first from a Black musician and the second from the director of a community art gallery in Bedford-Stuyvesant:

Music is a source of self-expression . . . I sing and dance because I have something in me that demands expression. It cries for expression, and I can not deny that cry. If anybody wants to listen, he can, and I shall dance for his benefit. Indeed, I am singing and dancing for a definite

audience, an audience consisting of those whose problems are just too complex to analyze. And as my nature changes on the stage every moment, especially under the stress and strain of letting off steam, then he or she hears me shout in joy. They are satisfied. The Negro artists encourage the self-styled self-expressionist to realize that he is really a communicator.

I'm trying to bring art to the people of the community to make them aware of their beautiful soul and their Black art. This will unite our people and better prepare us for the revolution of the future . . . Some other things we do are like trying to keep the kids together. We try to give them an awareness of self.

In the Puerto Rican community most people still say they appreciate art forms which are recognizably Puerto Rican, though considerable acculturation of the younger generation to American tastes in rock and other music has occurred. These people like Puerto Rican music, and especially appreciate the Afro-Cuban music sung by La Lupe and others, as well as the "Neorician" *salsa* music which mixes elements from a number of different traditions. Puerto Rican variety shows always include comedians and skits as well as music, and here themes derived from the urban life experience of Puerto Ricans as well as recollections of life on the home island are presented. The Puerto Ricans seemed to be becoming as self-conscious as the Blacks, and in much the same way; this may be due in part to their analogous position within New York's total urban structure and in part to the translation of Black ideas into Puerto Rican contexts.

On the whole, members of the Italian community we studied did not share such ideas, but it is interesting to note that some of the more politically active young men, through a process akin to stimulus diffusion, had noticed the important role of esthetic expression for ethnic identity among Blacks and were attempting to develop Italian esthetic forms so that they could increase the solidarity of the Italian community in New York's ethnic political arena.

The people of Suburbia were also quite self-conscious about their involvement in

art, but on the whole they were aware of its significance for them as individuals.<sup>12</sup> Here there was the notion that personal status was in some ways linked to an individual's artistic skills and particularly to an individual's skills as a consumer of art, in other words, the ability to appreciate and to express appreciation verbally. People linked themselves to some people, and distinguished themselves from others, on the basis of artistic tastes that were (or were not) shared. Teenagers learned the adult pattern and used it to distinguish themselves from adults.

The same process that creates solidarity within an ethnic category also divides the ethnic categories. In one Catholic parish in Rodney Park two essentially ethnic alliances (Irish-Italian-Syrian versus Puerto Rican-Cuban) competed for control of the parish "Family Nights" and other occasions when there was dancing. Each group complained that they could not dance to the "other" kind of music. In the same area, teenagers and adults split over whether to hire a "rock" or a "popular" band to perform at summer outdoor block parties.

People also use art to create links between ethnic categories. In Rodney Park, several individuals and institutions have attempted to use the arts — and especially the theater, perhaps because music is more closely tied to a particular ethnic group — as a bridge between the Italian community of Rodney Park and the adjoining Black and Puerto Rican communities. It was possible to devise theatrical projects which associated Blacks, Puerto Ricans and Italians in a common enterprise, and this effort succeeded, though others, particularly in the schools, did not. Yet it does not follow that creating such links (or, to put it another way, developing an esthetic language based on neighborhood rather than ethnic origin) was seen by the people involved as desirable goal in itself. This study was carried out during the Lindsay administration in New York City, and thus in a situation where there was considerable interest in anti-poverty and local community develop-

ment programs of all kinds. The Rodney Park Italian community was not poor enough to qualify for some programs and not numerous enough to control the more important ones, for the geographic base of these programs included large areas of Black, Puerto Rican, middle class and other populations. The Italians seemed to hope that they could exercise considerable control over these programs for the benefit of their own community if they established good relations with the neighboring Blacks and Puerto Ricans. The efforts of the various Rodney Park community groups to establish links with neighboring ethnic groups through common participation in summer theater programs and the like must be seen in this political context. In this area, at least, the arts were heavily politicized both as symbols of group unity as seen from the inside and as tools for forming politically useful links between communities on the outside.

#### *Brokers*

In the twin processes of politicization of art in urban communities and of dialectic between great, popular and folk traditions, one critical role stands out. This is the role of the individual who stands between two of the cultural traditions, and assumes the task of fostering the spread of one into the domain of the other. We refer to such individuals here as "cultural brokers," a term introduced by Wolf (1956) and Geertz (1960) in the somewhat different sense of a person who straddled two subcultures in complex civilizations such as Mexico or Indonesia, and who acted as a cultural translator and go-between. In the urban American context we are concerned with people who see themselves in some sense as the "missionaries" of the great tradition. They are brokers of culture as well as between cultures. Their role has two aspects: first, the spread of some version of the great tradition, and second, the use of artistic activity to bridge gaps believed to exist between ethnic or other communities.

One obvious category of brokers are the schoolteachers who play an important role in spreading ideas about the arts and their importance to their pupils. It may be that the kind of art that the pupils are exposed to would not be considered great tradition as seen from the other end of the telescope, but there is no doubt that what the teachers think they are doing is helping to spread an awareness of "culture" in the form of the great tradition. Teachers who see themselves as having a mission of this kind are likely to be active both inside and outside the school. Not only are there examples both from the public and parochial schools of teachers spending extra time with their own pupils, but also practically all the instructors of the storefront operations like the Republic Improvement Association (discussed below), including its founder, are schoolteachers.

The role of teachers may differ from an upper-middle-class community to a lower-middle-class one (i.e., from Suburbia to Rodney Park). In the latter, the teacher often sees himself as a kind of missionary to underprivileged children, and this inspires him to make an extra effort. In the former, where parents are likely to have more status and wealth than the teachers of their children, such a motivation may be absent — except when the teacher places herself or himself on the younger side of the generation gap and adopts the stance of instructing the pupils in matters their parents would rather they not hear about.

These differences are reflected in the kind of dissatisfaction with art education that parents and teachers express. In Rodney Park, many older parents are worried because the pupils are allowed too much self-expression; they look back fondly on the days when the teacher had the entire class draw the same thing at the same time. In Suburbia, the dissatisfaction seems to arise because children graduate from high school more or less rejecting the great tradition. Since parents want their children to do at least as well in life as they have done, and since acquisition of the cultural

symbols of success such as familiarity with the great tradition is considered to be important for success, parents are understandably worried at this rejection. In both Rodney Park and Suburbia, parents conceive of art education as essentially acquiring a skill; if the teacher is also a broker, however, he may be trying to undermine this parental attitude.

The best documented cultural broker in our study was Paul Maggio (a pseudonym) of Rodney Park. A native of the area, he had professional degrees from New York City universities. At the time of the study he was living in Rodney Park and teaching in a junior high school in another part of the borough. In early 1970 he worked through the Republic Improvement Association, an outgrowth of a block club on Republic Street in Rodney Park, to found the Republic School of the Arts in a neighborhood storefront. During the summer of 1970 the School of the Arts and the RIA under Maggio's direction were active in a number of local esthetic activities, such as running a "People's Fiesta" in collaboration with the Puerto Rican group to the west of Rodney Park, renovating or decorating several eyesores in the neighborhood including the building in which the RIA and the School of the Arts held their meetings, and sponsoring art classes for children and teenagers. Maggio saw his task as twofold: to introduce the children of the area to art, and to further interethnic harmony. The classes at the School of the Arts were not limited to the graphic arts, but included also drama and dance. Those who were involved in the drama group produced a Christmas play in 1970 entitled "Christmas in Westville" (an adjacent neighborhood). Written by the children, the play had as its rather somber theme an attempt by social workers to split up a family of six children orphaned by an automobile accident. The play was performed in a nearby union hiring hall. Another RIA activity during the winter of 1970/1971 was to serve as a social club for a small number of neighborhood boys, with the objective of keeping

them off the street and away from the temptations of drugs.

Maggio sought material help from a number of sources. The City of New York rented the RIA/School of the Arts space for \$1.00 a month. The RIA received financing from the Borough Anti-Poverty Corporation for the summer of 1970; fourteen young people from the neighborhood were hired to help the RIA. From September, 1970, the RIA received funds from the Borough Arts and Culture Association, which enabled it to hold classes in art, guitar, drama and dance. During the winter, Maggio applied to the Addiction Services Agency for funding as a drug-prevention center, with the idea that an active program in the arts and other activities would protect young people from involvement with drugs. He also applied to the Human Resources Administration for funding to operate a day care center, also with the idea of concentrating on arts activities for children. In May, 1971, this funding was approved, and the day care center went into action almost immediately. This funding tended to change the nature of the RIA by making it more bureaucratic. Right from the start there were indications that Maggio was taking his new bureaucratic role very seriously.

As might be expected, a man as active as Maggio did not stand aloof from politics. He was involved in an unsuccessful attempt to unseat the local congressman. He was active in various organizations that sought to encourage Italian solidarity against other ethnic groups, in part by adopting their tactics. He saw this particularly as a question of furthering an "Italian consciousness" through the use of the arts. Thus in Maggio we see mingled the threads of art, politics, and group identity; during this whole process his role as a broker of the great tradition in the local neighborhood continued, but one may perhaps suspect that any political success, even though to some extent based on his role as a cultural broker, would tend to make it impossible

or irrelevant for him to continue in that role.

Others, too were brokers. A devout Catholic guitarist was active in working out the forms for a folk mass in Rodney Park. A Bedford-Stuyvesant dance teacher was interested in encouraging her pupils to appreciate African and Afro-American dance forms; a Bedford-Stuyvesant art gallery director was quoted above on his view of his role. A New York disc jockey catering to Puerto Rican tastes in music nonetheless deliberately mixed in American music, thus expanding the cultural awareness of his listeners. A Suburbia woman was involved in an "enrichment" program in the arts for her local elementary school; she was as much broker as her neighbor who was "active" in support of the local symphony orchestra. What all these people have in common is that they see themselves as propagating a certain form of culture in a cultural domain where it does not exist or where its position is uncertain. The examples provided here suggest the critical significance of the cultural broker in the processes of transfer between the three streams of tradition as well as in the politicization of art.

#### *On studying urban wholes*

The present paper has attempted to introduce three ideas: 1) the usefulness of a neo-Redfieldian model for understanding the cultural and social processes of the city; 2) the importance of esthetic expression as an aspect of human relations, one whose social significance is closely related to the symbolization of collective and personal identities; and 3) the usefulness of the notion of "cultural broker" as a key role in urban social and cultural processes. The approach has been comparative within the framework of a single city; many of the concepts and insights presented here were elaborated as a consequence of the internal comparison of the contrasts and conver-

gences within the four communities studied. Furthermore, the comparative approach allows us to speak with more confidence of city-wide patterns since most of the processes were repeated in each of the four communities.

Anthropology has been traditionally concerned with the forms of esthetic expression within the cultures that it studies, whether they be graphic or decorative art, verbal or narrative art, or the performing arts of music, dance and drama. At the same time, anthropology has developed qualitative techniques for studying patterns of social relations in small communities and small groups. And finally, anthropology has been concerned with the need for constructing models of wholes — of whole civilizations and cultures. These three elements (a concern with the symbolic aspects of human behavior; a focus on the intricacies of everyday interpersonal relations; and a holistic approach) give anthropology a particularly advantageous position from which to investigate the connections between art and society.

This approach is a very promising one for the analysis of urban life. Too many studies of urban life have been partial. They have tried to analyze the networks of social relations in urban society, or the relations of broad groups (ethnic groups, classes, etc.) to one another. If an approach through community analysis is convincing for that community, we are never sure how far it can be extended, of what the whole is

like; if an approach through intergroup relations is convincing for the whole, we are never sure what it means for interactions between individuals. The best way out of this dilemma may be symbolic and esthetic analysis. What are the symbols that people manipulate, and what do they do with them? The analysis of symbols, of esthetics or performances should help us find the way to link individual behavior with the holistic patterns of the entire city or society. It is for this reason that we have been concerned throughout this study to keep in mind the implications of esthetic, symbolizing behavior for the city as a whole. It may be that this approach will open up a new door for the anthropological analysis of urban society; it has the advantage of focusing attention right from the start on the symbolic aspects of human behavior through which it may be possible to reach the deepest structures of American urban society.

Symbols cannot, however, be understood outside their political or economic contexts, and therefore attempts to understand the city as a whole must proceed on two parallel tracks, that of the symbols (esthetic behavior) in their social contexts and that of the concrete social, economic and political structures of the city. Such a procedure is necessary not only for conceptualizing the city as a whole, but also for the interpretation of the partial studies done in the context of the city.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>At the time the study was carried out, Hopkins was on the faculty of the Department of Anthropology, New York University; Ekpo, Heileman, Michtom, Osterweil and Sieber were students in that department; and Smith was a student at Pratt Institute.

<sup>2</sup>The project was carried out as part of a larger study on the arts and education in the New York City area. This study was sponsored by the Carnegie Institution and directed by Mr. Mark Schubart of the Division of Education of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts; the full results are reported in Schubart (1972). The part of the study

reported on here was directed by Hopkins. The field researchers (Ekpo, Heileman, Michtom, Osterweil, Sieber and Smith) met with the director in a weekly seminar to discuss problems in the work and to present their findings. At the end of the ten week research period, each field researcher presented a written report, and these were used by Hopkins as the basis for the overall report. All these reports were submitted to Lincoln Center under the title "The role of the performing arts in four New York communities" (Hopkins et al. 1971). Excerpts from this report and from a paper presented by Hopkins to the 1971 meeting of the

American Anthropological Association were reprinted in Schubart (1972:48-55). The present paper is an effort to place on the same material a more theoretical anthropological perspective as a stimulus to thinking and research. It was drafted by Hopkins and circulated to the other six researchers for comments, some of which have been incorporated in the present text. Thanks are due to Professors Dale F. Eickelman, Charles Leslie and Owen M. Lynch of the Department of Anthropology, New York University, for helpful comments and criticisms of an earlier draft of this paper. Professor John Middleton, then head of the Department of Anthropology, New York University, offered important material assistance during the field phase of this study. It should also be recorded that much of the initial intellectual stimulus for this project came from Professor Alan Harwood, now of the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

<sup>3</sup>The expressions "the arts" and "art forms" in this paper refer to the particular esthetic activities which are generally recognized in the United States: drama, dance, music, graphic arts, and so on. It is assumed that not all esthetic expression (art) is channelled through one of these culturally recognized forms; but because "the arts" is a cultural category which informs behavior, it seems reasonable to focus this paper on the graphic and performing arts. Exploration of other art forms (speech, dress, cooking, decoration of house and yard) is needed.

<sup>4</sup>It is hoped that this notion will become clearer as the argument proceeds. For the moment it begs the question of the relationship between a group or category of people on the one hand and a set of linked values, ideas and patterns of behavior on the other. The emphasis is on the relative integration and consistency of the forms of culture, particularly those which can be endowed with esthetic value by their bearers and/or by outside observers. The present terminology represents an effort not to prejudge what the boundaries of the groups characterized by cultural patterns are before beginning research. These boundaries should emerge from the data.

<sup>5</sup>Gans (1974) has recently published an analysis of different kinds of "taste cultures" in America. He suggests the utility of a system of five categories: high; upper middle; lower middle; low; and

quasi-folk low cultures, defined essentially in terms of their content but with some reference to the class status (in a Warnerian sense) of those most involved with each form.

<sup>6</sup>The research was carried out in the spring. R.T. Sieber, who maintained contact with this community after the close of our project, reports that there was more performing arts activity in the summer. This particularly involved bands playing "rock" and "traditionally-popular" music at block parties. Once a series of rock concerts was held to entice young people into political activity within the framework of the Democratic Party; the gambit was unsuccessful.

<sup>7</sup>These were not local songs, but songs from the popular tradition, promoted by certain reform groups among the Catholic clergy, and from various "religious" theme Broadway shows such as "Jesus Christ Superstar."

<sup>8</sup>See Warner (1959:101-225) for an analysis of the cultural symbolism of a parade in Yankee City celebrating the Tercentenary of that city. He remarks (1959:107): "This secular rite . . . stated symbolically what the collectivity believed and wanted itself to be."

<sup>9</sup>This is what emerged from the research in Suburbia, although it would seem to contradict the general point of view presented above; perhaps what one should say is that further research is called for. Note, however, the possibility of a folk tradition forming on the basis of an audience, as when Suburbia teenagers exchange records, get together to listen to music they can "relate" to, or form groups to attend live performances of rock stars.

<sup>10</sup>Compare with Gluckman's (1963) notion that the community can be defined by the existence of gossip networks.

<sup>11</sup>Thus ultimately the notion here is quite different from Gans's concept of "taste culture" which is not linked to a pattern of social relations.

<sup>12</sup>An exception were the Armenian and Assyrian groups, two varieties of Oriental Christians which had retained many of the social trappings of an ethnic group despite the move to the suburbs. Both groups' collective activities centered around their churches, which were active in sponsoring dances, cooperative preparations of feasts of ethnic foods and the like.

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