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A critical ethnographic study of a community’s aesthetic values

Leptak, Jeffrey Lynn, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1991

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A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY
OF A COMMUNITY'S AESTHETIC VALUES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Jeffrey Lynn Leptak, B.S., M.A.

* * * * *

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1991

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Almost every town of significant size now has its art museum, symphony, ballet, opera, and, theatre, and a host of smaller galleries and performing arts companies from medieval music ensembles to African dance troupes. Leaders in the arts, business, and government all agree that the arts are vital to the quality of life in a community. Yet, local and national studies indicate that the same audience appears at these arts programs. Most people find other ways to spend their leisure hours.

Why do some people not participate in the arts? In his seminal work, The Meaning of Adult Education, Eduard Lindeman attributed lack of participation to an emphasis on formal, aesthetic standards imposed by unknown and unsympathetic authorities (Brookfield, 1987). Lindeman (1961) observed that "the question of enjoyment does not enter the equation of this officialized culture--the problem is to get every one inoculated whether he likes it or not." (p. 66). Rather than indoctrinating a reticent public, Lindeman suggested adult education leaders should discover what individuals genuinely enjoy, and "if
reeducated adults happen to enjoy something which the academicians frown upon, there will be no apologies." (p. 66). Arguing that the enjoyment of art belongs to those who have "intrinsic sensibility," Lindeman charged that "the highest function of adult education may well be the discovery and release of these qualities of sensibility among the many." (p. 71). In the context of Lindeman's chapter about arts appreciation, I interpret "qualities of sensibility" as aesthetic preferences. The purpose of this study is to discover these "qualities of sensibility" among the adult residents of a single community neighborhood, Italian Village in Columbus, Ohio.

These "intrinsic sensibilities" would seem to comprise what sociologist Howard Becker (1978) calls "art worlds." Becker defines an art world as "all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others, as well, define as art." (1982, p. 34). As Vlach and Bronner (1986) note, the idea of art worlds raises an even more important question of meaning: what does art mean to whom? Michael Owen Jones (1987) suggests there are at least three art worlds—the artists, users, and scholars. The meaning of art for the artists, scholars, and others who dominate the leadership of arts organizations is already well documented, for the existing scholarly literature is their literature, a product of their art
world. In this study, I will explore the aesthetic values of the users, including those who have not been indoctrinated in the dominant art world or who have rejected that art world.

The notion of art worlds reconceptualizes art as a social process involving many persons in constructing, promoting, criticizing, theorizing, selling, displaying, and consuming artworks. When viewed as a social process, art is not an object, it is a way of thinking about objects. "Art" is a meaning or value assigned to an object or performance. An attempt to discover Lindeman's "qualities of sensibility" should consider the effect of the social process of art in forming aesthetic values.

Many art educators speculate that people reject the dominant art world because it has rejected them and their art world. The art of the working classes, racial and ethnic minorities, and women traditionally have been omitted from the art history and theory of the dominant art world, and thus hegemony between art worlds appears to be based on differences in class, race, or gender (for example, see Hart, 1991; Hicks, 1990; Hagaman, 1990; Jones, 1988). Any study of alternative art worlds should include participants normally excluded from the dominant art world.

Seeking to include all members of the community, F. Graeme Chalmers argues that "aesthetic experience best occurs on familiar ground. We should teach 'through the
public eye." (1981, p. 10). As a strategy for understanding the "familiar ground" of public aesthetic sensibility, Chalmers recommends ethnographic description of those things which have aesthetic value for learners. As a step towards meeting this objective, this study describes the aesthetic values of the residents of a culturally diverse neighborhood, using ethnographic methods such as those recommended by Chalmers.

**Individual Versus Social Construction of Knowledge**

The eclectic philosopher of adult education, Eduard Lindeman (1961) suggested that "if we take for granted that human nature is varied, changing, and fluid, we will know that life's meanings are conditioned by the individual." (1961, p. 8). Lindeman concludes that "knowledge and facts are relative to situations." (p. 17). Although Lindeman probably had no awareness of phenomenology, his own thinking exemplifies the interpretive, phenomenological epistemology which undergirds much qualitative research. Stanage (1988) and Collins (1984) assert that adult education itself is an inherently phenomenological enterprise. Phenomenology, the study of phenomena or consciousness, holds that it is impossible to know any empirical reality with absolute certainty because individuals intentionally construct their own consciousness. From the vast array of phenomena surrounding
an individual at any given moment, he or she chooses which phenomena to attend to. Phenomenology then is the study of how people construct their own meaning for the world around them. These meanings become a set of assumptions and tacitly understood facts which forms each person's life-world.

Focusing on social groups rather than individuals, social constructionist scholars assume that "reality, knowledge, thought, facts, texts, selves, and so on are constructs generated by communities of like-minded peers." (Bruffee, 1986, p. 774). Social constructionists, who work in all of the humanities and social sciences, acknowledge the existence of a physical reality, but maintain that our understanding of that reality is generated and justified socially. I assume a social constructionist epistemology in this study of community aesthetic values. In aesthetics, the idea of the life-world suggests that value is not inherent in artworks; rather, aesthetic value is a mental construct ascribed by individuals to artifacts chosen for such attention (Wolff, 1975). This study seeks to understand the aesthetic domain of the life-world of a group of persons sharing residence in a community.
Statement of the Problem

The problem involves the aesthetic values of a selected group of residents in the Italian Village area of Columbus, Ohio. In this study, I address two related groups of research questions. The major research question is: what are the aesthetic values of the residents of Italian Village? The question might also be seen in this way: What are the characteristics of the art worlds of a selected group of residents in Italian Village? The concept of art worlds emphasizes the possibility of co-existant value systems within a community and even within an individual.

Applying a definition of art as a social process raises a second group of questions about how people perceive this process. To what extent are they aware of the social process of art? How do they perceive their own involvement in that process? Are they satisfied with the process in general and their involvement in it?

Research Design of the Study

Lindeman asserted that "adult education is an attempt to discover a new method and create a new incentive for learning; its implications are qualitative, not quantitative." (1961, p. 18). In designing this study, I have used critical ethnographic methods, a relatively new form of qualitative research (Anderson (1989). Critical
ethnography balances an interest in the participants' own understanding of their experiences with concern about social structural constraints such as class, patriarchy, and race.

The Italian Village neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio, was selected as the site for the study because its residents represent a cross-section of midwestern metropolitan life in terms of race, class, age, and gender. A random sample of households was selected for participation in the study from the 577 Italian Village households listed in the Polk City Directory. Twenty-eight adult spokespersons from twenty-six households representing all areas of Italian Village were interviewed. The primary method of collecting data was semi-structured interviews, allowing the participants to select those themes which are most important to them (Spradley, 1979). Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Historical and demographic data regarding Italian Village were also collected. Data were analyzed and interpreted according to related themes, categories, and patterns emerging from my analysis of the literature and from the data itself (Dobbert, 1982).

Significance of the Study

In the sixty years since Lindeman wrote about the democratization of aesthetic education in The Meaning of
Adult Education, little has been done to discover and develop the "intrinsic sensibilities of the many," although many recognize the need (Baker, 1990; Hamblen, 1990a; Hicks, 1990; Wasson, Stuhr, & Petrovich-Mwaniki, 1989). There have been a few studies of the aesthetic values of specific minority population (Stuhr, 1987; Wasson, 1983), but additional research is needed to understand the aesthetic preferences of the folks who appear to be part of mainstream society, yet whose values may differ from those sanctioned by our leading cultural institutions.

Those who teach in adult or higher education programs often observe some unanticipated effects of youth education. The English teacher discovers that students enter the classroom with a well-developed hatred of literature, and math teachers find that many students feel hopelessly inept with numbers before the first lesson even begins. This phenomenon is called "deuterolearning" or "secondary outcomes." These acquired values, which may be positive or negative, "may well be the most important product of a learning experience." (Knowles, 1980, p. 212-3). Research has shown repeatedly that attitudes are one of the greatest barriers to participation in adult education (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). Thus, those who strive to provide aesthetic education for adults ought to know something about the nature and origin of the learners' extant aesthetic values. Ethnographic research provides
means "to tell us where the internalized antagonisms of the culture are thwarting the teacher's efforts." (Kneller, 1965, p. 14).

Although Lindeman's approach toward aesthetic education demands a radical reformation of our cultural arbiters, even educational providers limited by institutional missions to preserve, present, and interpret their current collection or repertoire should benefit from the insights developed in this study. The hermeneutic philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer argued that "only the support of the familiar and common understanding makes possible the venture into the alien, the lifting up of something out of the alien, and thus the broadening and enrichment of our own experience of the world." (1976, p. 15). Chalmers adds that aesthetic questions "are answered by individuals and groups in a variety of ways and affect student readiness for particular approaches and content in art education." (1984, p. 281-2). Since this study aims to describe "the common and familiar understanding," arts organizations will be able to use the data to develop bridges into their own world, which represents an alien art world for most current non-participants.

However, as Hamblen (1990) stated, "The specific skills used in local art production and response need to be identified, not merely for purposes of motivation and reinforcement of school art learning, but as valid
in-and-of-themselves." (p. 77). David Jones (1988) argues that the role of arts organizations should be "cultural development," helping people define and understand their own culture or art worlds. Thus, although this study will assist arts organization in educating the public about the current content of their collections or repertoire, the data will also provide a foundation for reforming the content of those arts organizations to reflect the art world of the communities they serve. An ethnographic study of a community's aesthetic values should serve as a basis for adult education in the arts, a foundation for program planning.

**Definitions**

**Ethnography** is a set of methods used for data collection and the written product which presents the results of such an investigation. Ethnographic methods are the techniques used "to uncover the social order and meaning a setting or situation has for the people actually participating in it." (Merriam & Simpson, 1984). Such methods include in-depth interviewing, participant observation, and document analysis. Whereas ethnographic methods traditionally have been designed to assure researcher objectivity, **critical ethnography** uses ethnographic methods to "unmask dominant social constructions and the interests they represent." (Anderson,
In this sense, critical ethnography is openly ideological.

Community is defined as "the common sense of identity which brings people closer together. It may be defined by concern over conditions in a geographic area or common concerns of a widely dispersed people." (Dean and Dowling, 1987, p. 85). In this study, residence in a specific neighborhood is the defining attribute of a community.

I will apply the definition of art favored by sociologists, who generally regard art as a social process, not a specific product. According to Zolberg (1990), the arts are "social constructs emergent from processes of social negotiation, rather than fixed entities." (p. 165). Art and the arts shall refer to the processes and products pertaining to visual, performing, and literary arts. The arts include (but are not limited to) painting, drawing, sculpture, dance, theatre, music, and poetry. Artwork specifies individual artistic products, such as a watercolor painting or musical composition, which Zolberg called "fixed entities." The persons interviewed for this study, however, may have their definitions for these terms. One of the purposes of this research is to elicit such meanings from members of the community.

Arts participation refers to attendance at live performances of music, dance, or theatre; visits to museums and galleries; viewing or listening to media reproductions
of such events; or direct involvement in creating such events (Orend, 1987).

**Aesthetic values** comprises general philosophical concepts about art, rather than thinking about individual artworks (Zolberg, 1990). Aesthetic values includes such concerns as the relative value of one artwork over another, what characteristics give value to an artwork, the value of art in one's own life, and the value of art in society.

**Art world**, according to Becker (1978) refers to the people who participate in the production of art, but in this study, *artworld* shall be viewed as a subset of the *life-world*, the assumptions and beliefs which individuals use to make meaning of the world around them (Wildemeersch and Leirman, 1988). Thus, in this study, *artworld* includes the aesthetic domains of meaning and the cultural products signified by those meanings in addition to the people who create such meanings.

**Limitations**

Like any researcher, I approach this project with an existent "life-world" (Wildemeersch & Leirman, 1988), "meaning perspective" (Mezirow, 1978), or "EVERYDAYNESS" (Stanage, 1988); that is, a set of assumptions and tacit knowledge used in making meaning of the world. Hammond (1989) comments that data are not "out there" to be picked up:
Rather, they are produced by human researchers; people who have histories, ethics, interests, ideologies, values, and flaws; who ask some questions but fail to ask others; who use some research methods but fail to use others; who conceptualize problems and operationalize concepts in some ways but not others. (p. 111).

Because of these limitations inherent in any investigation, all that any researcher can do is discover "part of the truth," for which the whole picture will never be fully understood (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

My own aesthetic values embrace a wide range of artistic activities and beliefs, reflecting the broadly inclusive stance taken by folklorists and material culture scholars (Bronner, 1986; Vlach & Bronner, 1986; Jones, 1987). Such an approach typifies sociological research, which focuses on the social context of art rather than the artworks themselves (Zolberg, 1990). An open-minded attitude about alternative concepts of art is necessary for this particular research problem, which I chose in order to better understand cultural hegemony and alternative art worlds.

This study has implications for arts education in non-traditional settings, but it is not the purpose of this project to develop specific programs or curricula. That task must be left to those who work within the realities of institutional contexts.
Organization of the Study

Chapter II analyzes and reviews literature from the fields of critical theory, art theory, sociology of the arts and adult education, participation studies in the arts and adult education, and cultural development.

Chapter III explains the conceptual framework and research methodology. The conceptual framework draws upon epistemology and social theories to provide a philosophical basis for the methodology of critical ethnography. The methodology section addresses the setting of the study, sample selection, data collection, analysis and interpretation, and validity and reliability.

Chapters IV and V present the data analysis and interpretation. Chapter IV surveys the aesthetic values of Italian Village residents, concluding that individuality of aesthetic reception is most highly valued. Chapter V examines aspects of cultural hegemony as expressed by the residents of Italian Village. I examine both external and internal incidents of conflict over aesthetic values.

Chapter VI offers a summary, conclusions, recommendations for neighborhood development, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature which influenced the development of this dissertation, a critical ethnographic study of a community's aesthetics values, is drawn primarily from the areas of sociology, art education, and adult education. The particular theories and research findings that each area contributes to this study are unusually interdisciplinary and resist tidy categories. During the conceptualization and the implementation of this study, these fields were thoroughly interrelated, even interdependent, but for a more meaningful review, the literature will be organized as five major topics. Prefatory notes on critical theory and art theory will introduce some basic concepts and philosophical foundations. The sociology section includes sociology of adult education and sociology of the arts. The participation studies section reviews participation studies in adult education and audience surveys from the arts. In the final section, I discuss cultural development, the area where art education meets adult education to address the problem of participation in the arts. The relationships
between these topics and their subdivisions will be
discussed throughout the chapter.

Critical Theory

Most of the scholars currently interested in the
sociology of education or the arts cited in this
dissertation have been influenced by critical theory, which
is actually an interdisciplinary group of theories. The
relationships among these theories tend to obscure
dissension among critical theorists. The premises that
critical theories hold in common were outlined by Gibson
(1986) as follows:

1. Critical theorists insist that theory is
   indivisible from practice. To many readers, critical
   theorists often seem preoccupied with theorizing.
2. Critical theorists believe knowledge is socially
   constructed.
3. Critical theorists seek to provide enlightenment
   about the actual conditions of social life, focusing on
   struggles over power.
4. Critical theorists claim to be emancipatory by
   exposing oppressive conditions,
5. Critical theorists are sympathetic to the theories
   of Karl Marx, but do not reduce all explanations to
   economic determinism, as Marx did.
when people refer to critical theory, they generally mean some configuration of these basic premises.

The critical theorists known collectively as the Frankfurt School (Marcuse, Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, and more recently, Habermas) believed that the validity and significance of the arts could not be reduced to the "relations of production" that dominated all other aspects of society. Operating independently of economic forces, culture offers an opportunity for enlightenment and emancipation (Breckman, 1987; Hauser, 1986). According to Gibson (1986), the Frankfurt School, being German, was devoted to Kultur as the only valid form of culture. Kultur denotes aristocratic preferences or high culture, always serious and complex. Masse means common tastes, usually trivial (Gans, 1974). The Frankfurt philosophers believed the art of high culture embodies "social tendencies," truths about its own and future times. Art was not meant to serve proletarian interests, but to express humanity's interest in future happiness. Art reveals society (enlightenment) and shows what might be (emancipation). To facilitate such change, they insisted that art must be studied in its social context as a social process, which is now also a basic principle of sociology of art. Critical theorists also admitted that high culture had become a commodity in service to social functions. Consequently, they were interested in the production and
reception of that commodity. Critical theorists and sociologists of the arts share these interests in the social context, production and reception of the arts.

However, just as the critical theorists have gone beyond Marx in their theorizing, many sociologists in the arts have gone beyond critical theory. The problem with critical theory in relation to sociology of the arts is a strikingly uncritical devotion to high culture. Critical theorists typically believe that capitalist production imposes its needs on society, dominating aesthetic tastes by simultaneously creating and satisfying supposed consumer needs. Popular culture as a tool of capitalism is a revival of the old Roman policy of "give them bread and circuses." (Truitt, 1977). According to the Frankfurt School, popular culture stifles critical thinking, causing people to acquiesce to their own subordination by behaving in ways contrary to their real interests. Through popular culture, social oppressors teach the masses to accept their inferiority as a natural condition. Critical theorists often described popular culture in such inflammatory terms as barbaric, brutalizing, trivial, spurious, and cretinous (Gibson, 1986).

As art agnostics, most sociologists avoid evaluative judgments and are unwilling to exclude popular culture from the discussion (Wolff, 1981; Zolberg, 1990). Others, like DiMaggio (1987), argue that Marxism's contempt for popular
culture has been "decisively rebutted on both empirical and theoretical grounds." (p. 440). David Jones (1988) and Rex Gibson (1986) offer this critique of the critical theorists' objections to popular culture:

1. The Frankfurt philosophers' discussion of culture reflects their own experience in an educated elite; they were antagonistic to anything outside their familiar culture. Such a privileged background is not the experience of most people, who thus do not share Frankfurt School biases.

2. The critical theorists' sneering at popular culture denigrates many people and their culture.

3. Popular culture is not unique to capitalist hegemony. For many years, China and the Soviet Union manipulated mass culture to suit the state's purposes.

4. Popular culture, especially youth culture, is often a protest against the dominant culture, thus serving the purposes of enlightenment and emancipation.

5. Popular culture has its own aesthetic values. Popular artworks have as much meaning for their consumers as the fine arts have for members of aristocratic culture. To deny this is to deny the validity and individuality of many persons' experiences.

6. The opposition between high and popular culture is false. Many people straddle both cultures, and it is possible to move up or down cultural hierarchies Although
sociologists are influenced by the critical theorists' interests in the social aspects of artistic production and consumption, the above contradictions make critical theory incompatible with much research in sociology of the arts and cultural development.

**Art Theories**

Art commonly evokes a wide range of meanings. Usually, it refers to cultural products, such as symphonies, sculptures, novels, paintings, and so on. Sometimes art means the artistic process itself, what artists actually do when making art. Art can also be used evaluatively, to assign quality to a work, as an honorific. Unfortunately, we often use the art to mean all of these and more, which greatly complicates any discussion about art (Mann, 1977).

Aesthetics, the philosophy of art, did not exist as a distinct intellectual discipline until the eighteenth century in England and later throughout Europe and the United States. The early aestheticicians expressed the following assumptions about art, which most arts scholars still profess today:

1. The standards of taste are agreed upon universally.
2. Art requires originality.
3. Artists are regarded as gifted geniuses.
4. Artists express their unique vision through their work.
5. Aesthetic experiences offer special and significant insights that cannot be obtained in any other way. (Dissanayake, 1988).

However, many cultures have never shared this concept of art; these supposedly universal ideas were unknown and remain unknown in other places and times (Hart, 1991; Dissanayake, 1988).

Hart (1991) summarizes the basic tenets of western aesthetics as originality, individuality, permanence, and more recently, abstract form as a primary value. The influential critic Clive Bell (1913), for example, defined art as any work possessing significant form, capable of provoking an aesthetic feeling in any viewer. Like other aestheticians, he thought these concepts to be valid independent of time and place.

Collingwood (1938) wrote a history of theories about art to demonstrate the superiority of what he believed to be "true" theories of art. In his traditional aesthetic view, only paintings mattered, but the theories apply equally well to all cultural products. Although aestheticians disregard some of these theories, they are still popular with many people. All of the following are described in Collingwood's Principles of Art (1938).

**Art as Craft.** Etymologically (from Latin), art means craft or skill. As seen Robert Pirsig's novel, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, this is still common usage.
People who regard art primarily as craftsmanship are interested in the relationship between the means and the end, between the planning and the execution. There is a clear distinction between raw material and the final product. The dadaists' "found objects" and "ready-mades" are not accepted as art.

**Art as Representation.** Plato and Aristotle may have originated this theory, but it remains alive in the general public. Representation assumes craftsmanship as a prerequisite, for it requires considerable skill in execution. Representational art is judged in relation to external matters, to the thing being represented. However, some people prefer emotional representation, visual representation of the feelings associated with the original external image.

**Art as Utilitarian Purpose.** Collingwood called this theory *art as magic*, a problematic choice revealing an assumption that only primitive people have practical concerns. Utilitarian art is designed for a preconceived end, such as liturgical art or a drama to educate the public about AIDS. Utilitarian art stirs emotions in order to soothe, to assuage, to control, or to affect change.

**Art as Amusement.** When art evokes emotions for escapist entertainment, without other motives, art serves a separate function as amusement. The arousal and harmless discharge of emotions is its objective. In this hedonistic
there can be no unpleasant art, and probably no serious art.

Art as Expression. Art for utilitarian purposes and art for amusement focus on the audience's emotional experience, but art as expression focuses on the artist's emotional experience. Arousing emotion is not the same as expressing emotion. The latter individualizes emotional experience, restricting it to the artist's choice of emotions.

Art as Imagination. According to this theory, the artist's objective is to consciously and voluntarily create something which existed previously only in the artist's mind. The result is a unique work which is valid in its own right, not as an imitation of something else or as a means to some other end. In other words, this is art for its own sake.

Collingwood considered the first four theories to epitomize false art, whereas the last two categories, expression and imagination, defined true art. These theories represent an artist-centered view that typifies traditional aesthetics (Zolberg, 1990).

Theories about art abound, applying a variety of perspectives: historical, psychological, sociological, anthropological, and philosophical. Dissanayake (1988) borrows the perspective of ethology, the study of animal behavior. In this instance, the animal is human and the
behavior is creating and consuming art. Her comprehensive survey of art theories, both formal and informal, found the following themes to be recurrent.

1. Skill (mastery of technique, complexity, fineness, accuracy of imitation).
2. Artifice (something done, not natural).
3. Beauty and pleasure.
4. Sensual quality (appeal to the senses).
5. Order or harmonizing.
6. Innovatory tendencies (creativity, imagination, invention).
7. Communication (expression).
8. Important concerns (serious, significant meaning).
9. Heightened experience (emotion, entertainment, ecstasy).

Dissanayake concludes that the only truly universal characteristic of art is "making special," a process of distinguishing the ordinary from the extraordinary (1988, p. 104).

Sociology of Adult Education

The literature on the sociology of adult education is a thin body of readings. Most of the literature is European, primarily examining relationships between sociological research and adult education. There has been little original research in the sociology of adult education (Rubenson, 1989).
Barry Elsey (1986) defined sociology as "the study of society, or more precisely, of social interactions and relationships between people as members of various groups and institutions." (p. 81). Gender, age, occupation, and social class are the most important determinants of social groupings. The central question of social systems research is how external influences affect individual behavior, as related to gender, age, and so on. Two distinct social system theories which emerged in sociological research are consensus theory and conflict theory (Elsey, 1986). The paradigms reflect different visions of the role of adult education in society regarding social stratification, mobility, and control (Rubenson, 1989).

Consensus theorists assume that societies share some attitudes and values in common, and depend on these shared values to survive. In consensus theory, conflict is regarded as incidental. Social hierarchies are a naturally developed system for making society work effectively. Rewards are distributed through the hierarchy according to socially accepted standards. An unequal distribution of power is attributed to natural differences in abilities and efforts. Elite groups improve society by providing role models, leadership, and standards of excellence. Despite social disparities, what matters is that the majority shares a consensus view of society (Rubenson, 1989; Elsey, 1986).
Conflict theory, however, argues that certain groups exercise economic, political, or cultural power in order to determine social norms and values in their own interests. Consensus is an illusion devised to help maintain power for the few (Elsey, 1986). Social order is achieved through inducement and coercion at best, or domination and force at worst. The inevitable result is divisiveness and conflict between competing segments of society, although as Rubenson (1989) says, "open conflict is only the tip of the iceberg." (p. 54).

In adult education, consensus theorists regard the various agencies of adult education, such as employers, colleges, and community education programs as agents of socialization. Their main function is to develop commitment to the broad values of society. Conflict theorists also see educational institutions as agents of socialization, but as agents of the dominant culture in particular, directly involved in cultural and social control. As an embodiment of the values of the dominant culture, schools perpetuate inequalities, reproducing and legitimating the power structures of society. Because adults have the ability to change society in a more immediate sense than children, adult education is especially valuable to education for social change, or counterhegemonic education (Rubenson, 1989).
Elsey's taxonomy of adult education (1986) offers four models: the recreation-leisure model, the work training model, the liberal-progressive model, and the radical model. The latter two approaches are most closely related to the social theories described above. Within the liberal-progressive model, an agenda for social and educational reform is identified by experts on social conditions who seek consensus for the direction of social change. Such changes usually emphasize maintaining standards of excellence for the betterment of all. Within the radical model, the first task is to challenge assumptions about economic, political, and cultural ideas and social structures. Concerned that education reproduces the power structures of society, radical adult educators seek to counteract inequalities originating in schools for the young. They believe the notion of excellence is derived from a socially restrictive concept of culture. The overall objective of radical adult education is to correct social imbalances. Elsey's liberal-progressive model is a consensus theory of education, whereas the radical model is a conflict theory, with roots in critical theory.
Sociology of the Arts

Considerably more literature is available about sociology of the arts. Yet, most scholars would agree sociology of the arts has no main theoretical perspective and lags behind other sociological subfields (Blau, 1988). Anyone interested in sociology of the arts will find it to be an elusive topic. The Library of Congress Subject Headings Index does not have a category for sociology of the arts. The closest subject is "art and society," which covers a wide range of academic musing, but little that would be acknowledged by sociologists (Manfredi, 1982). Every linkage of art and society, no matter how mundane or esoteric, gets thrown into the mix. When searched for arts research, even social science databases such as Sociofile generate lists that resemble a table of contents from the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism more than American Sociological Review. Blau (1988) characterizes most writing on sociology of the arts as moral interpretations of art, arbitrary and systematic. There are a few classic references, such as Janet Wolff's The Social Production of Art (1981) and Arnold Hauser's The Sociology of Art (1982), but both rely upon historical and philosophical research as the basis for their arguments. The result is some important social history and social philosophy, but not much social science (Leptak, in press).
Sociology Versus the Arts

According to Zolberg's *Constructing a Sociology of the Arts* (1990), research in the sociology of the arts is inherently problematic due to the attempted merger of divergent ways of thinking about art. Blau (1988) concurs, noting that whereas subjects such as the family, political parties, neighborhoods, classrooms, and corporate management exemplify the type of social relations amenable to sociological inquiry, art resists such treatment. Art is socially produced, but scholars of the arts insist that it must be treated on its own terms.

Scholars from the humanities, such as art history, aesthetics, and criticism, typically view art as magic, a mysterious emanation from the mind of an artistic genius (Zolberg, 1990; Hauser, 1984). On the other hand, social scientists such as sociologists or economists perceive art as just another social phenomenon, the result of extended collaboration in which artists sometimes appear to be minor players. The art scholars' reverence for the object often precludes all matters external to the artwork, whereas the sociologists' preoccupation with social processes seems to ignore art objects and their makers (Zolberg, 1990; Wolff, 1984).

Zolberg (1990) offers the following summary of the debate between sociology and the arts. Aestheticians believe art provides its own meaning. Any consideration of
external factors is misleading, thus the aesthetic point of view might be termed "internalist." Sociologists assume art and everything else is contextualized in meaning, so they adopt an "externalist" point of view. For example, aestheticians think that value resides within the artwork, but sociologists will look at external factors, such as the marketplace. Aestheticians assume artworks are unique, whereas sociologists seek regularity and typicality in their findings. Aestheticians believe artists work alone, but sociologist find making art to be a social process. For aestheticians, the study of art is an end unto itself, but sociologists regard art as just another means of understanding society. Aestheticians focus on major artists and artworks, whereas sociologists are willing to consider any and all conceptions of art, including folk art, popular art, and material culture.

Zolberg (1990) and Wolff (1984) agree that both aesthetic and sociological positions, considered individually, are reductionist. The aesthetic approach is defunctionalized and formalistic, without regard for human involvement in arts production and reception. The sociological approach is process and people oriented, without regard for the artworks. Zolberg and Wolff recommend a balance of interests in all further inquiry in the sociology of the arts.
Wolff (1983, 1981) contends that the question of "what is art?" is really a question about what society considers to be art. We cannot discuss the meaning of an artwork without asking, meaning for whom? Who receives the artwork and how? Questions about the production of art and the artworks themselves are inextricably linked to questions about the reception of art. Wolff concludes there is no pure aesthetics, that aesthetics is necessarily a sociological understanding of art.

Hamblen (1986) proposes the following bases for studying the sociology of the arts:

1. Social institutions (arts organizations).
2. Temporal change.
3. The art object or performance.
4. The artist.
5. The functions of art.
6. Artistic media and technology (the means of making art).
7. The public.

Social historians (such as Levine, 1988; Hauser, 1982) and sociologists (for example, Zolberg, 1990; Becker, 1982) have been active in the first few categories. As recommended by Hamblen, this study of a community's aesthetic values will focus on her latter category, the public.
The Social Production of Art

Until the fifteenth century, production of the crafts now known as art was often a collective process managed by guilds of skilled laborers (Hauser, 1982). Most sociologists agree with Howard Becker's analysis (1982) that artmaking has always been and remains a collective process. The performing arts have always required elaborate systems of composers, playwrights, choreographers, conductors, directors, managers, designers, singers, dancers, actors, and stagehands, all having a hand in creating the final work. Film and television often use even larger creative teams, sometimes involving hundreds of workers. Even writers adapt their work to fit into the publishing network of editors, graphic artists, marketing experts, and critics. Despite the myth of the artist alienated from society, artists do not work alone. They participate in a series of activities similar to manufacturing processes (Becker, 1982). However, among traditionalists, the myth of the individual artist-genius is so endemic that some art historians specialize in inventing anonymous medieval savants, the "Master of (Name of Town)" or "Teacher of (Name of Known Artist)" (Zolberg, 1990).

Reception Aesthetics

When art knowledge is regarded as a social construction, even more people can be perceived as having a
role in the social production of art. The relatively new area of reception aesthetics maintains that the quality of "art" resides not in the object, but in the viewer. As Wolff (1981) says, "without the act of reception/consumption, the cultural product is incomplete." (p. 96). Just as a house is not a home until someone takes up residence (attributed to Marx by Gibson, 1986), the cultural product is just an object or an activity until an audience recognizes it as art. Because the dialectic between the viewer and the object determines artistic meaning, Hamblen (1986) argues that "the spectator needs to be considered as a co-creator of the art experience." (p. 59). Moreover, the social production of art does not end with the public's attribution of significance to artwork. Through their reaction and feedback, audiences influence artists' choices, which are then offered to the public for further reaction. Artists cannot truly stand apart from society because, like all people, the artists themselves are products of and producers of society (Becker, 1982; Wolff, 1981).

The question then arises, how do audiences recognize art? According to Wolff (1981), audiences receive cultural products against a background of other artworks and the background of everyday experience. Jones (1988) explains that "the experience of each individual personality and imagination interacting with a work of art must be unique
to that individual. No-one else can bring the same personality and personal history to bear on the work." (p. 69). Hence, reception aesthetics calls for broad, context-based interpretation that accounts for public response (Hamblen, 1986).

Sociologists of the arts generally accept that art does not have a single "theological" meaning delivered from an artist/god. They also perceive creating art to be a social process, involving many others besides the commonly acknowledged artist. The audience has an active role in creating meaning, thus the audience is also involved in constructing the artwork. (Wolff, 1981, 1975).

The Institutional Theory of Art

Dubuffet (1986) was concerned that culture had become identified with institutionalism, which he believed contributed to the public's alienation from art. Wolff (1981) agrees that arts institutions are powerful gatekeepers, acting as mediators between art and the public. Arts institutions have the ability (power) to decide who becomes an artist, how they become an artist, how they practice their art, and how the public gets access to their art. As an artist, Dubuffet had good reason to be worried.

The institutional theory of art "defines art by reference to those objects and practices which are given the status of art by the society in which they exist."

(Wolff, 1983, p. 77). Duncan (1983) asserts that artists' work "only becomes art when it is made visible within an art context." (p. 101). In other words, art is whatever people, at least the right people representing the right institutions, choose to call art.

This kind of thinking is denigrated by most traditional aesthetic philosophers as too relativistic and inattentive to aesthetic form, but Arthur Danto (1964) agrees that art is whatever institutions accept and designate as art. Danto finds that much twentieth century art voids the idea of art as something special. Marcel Duchamp's In Advance of the Broken Arm, for example, is nothing more than an ordinary snow shovel purchased at a hardware store (Becker, 1982). Specialness resides not in objects, but in people who can assign special significance to objects. Duchamp knew how to acquire that significance. In recognizing the institutional nature of art, Danto adopted a social process definition of art favored by sociologists of the arts.

Art Worlds

Related to the social production of art is the idea of art worlds as networks of production. Art worlds gained prominence in the literature with the publication of Howard Becker's book of that title (1982). Vlach and Bronner attribute the first use of art world to Russell Lynes's The Tastemakers (1949), although Becker himself does not cite Lynes. Becker defines art worlds as consisting of "all
people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art." (p. 34). The idea of art worlds as social networks is consistent with and perhaps even identical to a social process theory of art (Wolff, 1981). Therefore, in my discussion of art worlds, I will apply the art world concept and label to other theories of art that recognize what Blau (1988) calls "peopled arrangements" of art production and consumption (p. 269).

Lynes classifies tastes as highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow, but limits the art world to the highbrow. As Levine (1988) has shown, the high/middle/low scheme is neither original nor insightful, but Lynes does provide a useful account of changes in tastes through recent history. Arthur Danto (1964) also discusses a single, highbrow art world, where seeing art requires more than a sense of vision--it requires knowledge of art theory and history.

Dennis Mann (1977) divides culture into the customary three categories, but replaces high, middle, and low with high art, low art, and folk art. Instead of assuming that highbrow standards should be applied to all art, Mann describes each art world as having its own standards for judging quality. High art is affirmed on a meritocratic basis, for being more comprehensive and informative. Low art is evaluated on a popular basis, accepting broad public
appeal as the best authority. Folk art is judged
idealistcally as the true expression of ageless cultural
traditions. Although Mann applied the commonly used
hierarchical labels, the separate principles of excellence
associated with each category suggest a horizontal, rather
than vertical alignment.

Another way to identify the content of Mann's
categories with less evaluative and more descriptive terms
would be: fine art, popular art, and folk art. Fine art
standards have greater enduring value across time, with a
national, if not international following, although the
consumers of fine arts are limited in number. Popular art
standards change rapidly, but are consumed by many across
large geographic areas. Like fine art, folk art standards
also endure through time and are received by few, but there
is greater variation from one community to another (Moe,
1988).

Lynes and Danto acknowledge only one taste category as
the art world, but Becker's definition allows for many.
Like most sociological studies of art, Becker's book
primarily examines social organizations of people, in this
instance, people who produce art. He uses comparative and
historical methods to study the making of art as a group
process. As evidence, he cites visual artists such as
Picasso who have always relied on others, such as printers
and foundry workers, to perform significant tasks in
printmaking or casting metal sculptures. Writers have their editors and publishers, composers require performers and conductors, and so on. Despite these cooperative art production methods, arts scholars generally acknowledge only one creator, even in filmmaking, where auteur theory has established the director as the author of the film. Becker concludes that all art production works involve some division of labor among a large number of persons (at least in western culture).

Dealers and critics also populate Becker's art worlds. Dealers are essential to art worlds for their ability to convert aesthetic value into economic value, so that artists can live on the basis of their aesthetic output. Dealers, impresarios, and arts presenters reach wider markets than any artist could alone. Critics use their judgments to advise distributors, consumers, and the artists themselves, establishing the rules of any given art world for both production and consumption.

Art worlds are unbounded systems. The borders between art worlds have always been vague and permeable or elastic. Cultural activities easily cross categories, such as when folk artists are "discovered" by high art world collectors, dealers, or curators. Moreover, art worlds do not exist apart from the rest of society, as their members belong to and are influenced by a variety of other worlds (Zolberg, 1990; Levine, 1988; Becker, 1982).
Significantly, Becker's art worlds consist only of professionals, people who earn a living in service to the arts, whether directly or indirectly. Early in the book, he says art is that which is appreciated, but he consistently stops short of including consumers in the artistic process. Even the servant who woke Anthony Trollope at 5:30 every morning with a cup of coffee is placed in an art world, but Trollope's readers are not.

Vlach and Bronner (1986) borrowed the art worlds concept for their book, *Folk Art and Art Worlds*. Since folk art is distinguished by its basis in community tradition, the art world concept reinforces the importance of understanding folk art within its social world or community of origin. Most taxonomies of art treat folk art as a single category, but Vlach and Bronner refer broadly to folk art worlds, indicating multiple networks for the producing the folk arts. However, neither Vlach and Bronner nor Becker offer any guidance for distinguishing one art world from another. They describe the characteristics of art worlds in general, but none in particular.

Another folklorist, Michael Owen Jones (1987), suggests three "paradigms of excellence" based on individuals' role as participants in the arts (p. 23). Jones's art worlds consists of:

1. **Creators**, subdivided into amateurs and specialists.
2. **Consumers**, subdivided into local customers and cosmopolitan collectors.

3. **Scholars**, whose art knowledge and interests are considered different enough from the interests of other users to warrant a separate category.

Obviously, Jones considers production and consumption to comprise different art worlds. Jones's taxonomy does not lend itself to a hierarchical arrangement.

Another non-hierarchical taxonomy is Hamblen's (1990a) "art contexts." Hamblen does not define art contexts, but her use of the term is consistent with Becker's concept of art worlds. Her examples come from the visual arts, but the implications of her categories are interdisciplinary. The art contexts are:

1. **Professional communities** consists of artists and arts institutions such as galleries and museums. Because of their role in the professionalization of artists, colleges and universities are included among the professional communities.

2. **School contexts** refer to art instruction in formal school environments, kindergarten through high school. Hamblen cites Efland's findings (1976) that school art activities differ significantly from both institutionally validated and locally validated art knowledge, concluding that school art processes and products are unique to the school context.
3. **Local contexts** include everyday art experiences, learned through informal processes. Local art includes much popular art, folk art, environmental and domestic art. The products of these contexts are called professional art, school art, and local art, although I will treat those labels as synonymous with context.

When considered as a group, the preceding models of art worlds merge and diverge in their conceptual schemes, creating overlapping categories. Studies of public tastes, such as those by Lynes (1949) and Gans (1974) focus on consumers of art. Becker (1982) and Vlach and Bronner (1986) focus on the people more directly involved in creating artworks, including auxiliary personnel along with the artists themselves. Jones (1987) and Hamblen (1990a) include participants in both production and reception. More traditional approaches, such as Lynes' (1954) tripartite taxonomy is hierarchical. Becker (1982) does not explicitly delineate a structured hierarchy, but he defends the hierarchical implications of his findings as consistent with the hierarchical nature of our society. Becker's protests notwithstanding, Mann (1977), Jones (1987) and Hamblen (1990a) constructed non-hierarchical models.
Arts Worlds within the Life-world

An approach to art world theory that accommodates and accounts for all of the previously discussed models draws upon the hermeneutic concept of the life-world. Wolff (1975) postulates "the experience and creation of works of art are one part of the total life-world." (p. 17). If we consider art in the life-world within the context of art as a social process (Wolff, 1981), the idea of art as a part of the life-world expands to include art worlds within the life-world. To be succinct: art worlds are subsets of the life-world. We might imagine three concentric circles, with art in the center, art worlds in the middle, and life-world encompassing all.

Meanings in the life-world, or everyday experience of individuals, are learned through social interaction and shared socially. Different life-worlds develop in different contexts. All people live in a variety of overlapping worlds (or social roles) as employees, parents, neighbors, and citizens. Likewise, many people have multiple roles in the arts. An amateur painter of fine art styles may be a fan of Celtic folk music, or a high school music teacher might also play blues guitar professionally. Thus, the various art world models reviewed here are not mutually exclusive. Any individual may operate in several of these art worlds, depending on context at any given moment (Jagodzinski, 1982).
Jones (1987) calls his tripartite model "paradigms of excellence," arguing that creators, consumers, and scholars each apply different standards of excellence. The paradigms of excellence concept applies equally well to the art world taxonomies devised by Mann and Hamblen. Both models include internally consistent but different criteria for excellence in each art world. On the other hand, hierarchical models of high, middle, and low culture cannot be construed as paradigms of excellence because in the hierarchy, only high culture confers excellence. We now have three paradigms of excellence provided by Mann, Jones, and Hamblen.

To integrate and synthesize the art world theories into a comprehensive model of art in the life-world, I attempted to clarify the confusion of overlapping terms and concepts by assigning new names to some of the elements in the three paradigms of excellence. To emphasize the non-hierarchical nature of Mann's paradigm, I apply Moe's descriptive labels for Mann's categories. Because Mann's scheme is based on studies of taste, I call it the taste culture paradigm. Having applied Jones's "paradigms of excellence" label to other models as well, I renamed his plan the participation roles paradigm, emphasizing its focus on individuals' role as participants in the art worlds. Hamblen's model remains unchanged. The result is a comprehensive model of art worlds organized into paradigms of excellence, displayed in Table 1.
In attempting to define folk art, Welsh (1980) offers a helpful axiom: "Hills are defined not by the edges but by their middles." (p. 226). Not only folk art, but all art world paradigms are like hills, for "it is the very nature of the subject that discrete boundaries are constructs of the intellect with no corresponding reality." (p. 227).

For this study, the central tendencies are more important than the admittedly problematic parameters.

**Cultural Hegemony: Art Worlds in Conflict**

Integral to any conflict theory of society is the concept of hegemony. Rubenson (1989) defines hegemony as "the way one class exercises political, cultural, or economic influence over other classes," a matter of moral and cultural influence more than physical force or political intimidation. (p. 56). Because culture is not separate from any other aspect of society, including

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**Table 1**

**ART WORLDS: PARADIGMS OF EXCELLENCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taste Cultures</th>
<th>Participant Roles</th>
<th>Art Contexts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine Art</td>
<td>Creators</td>
<td>Professional Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>Popular Art</td>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td>School Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folk Art</td>
<td>Scholars</td>
<td>Local Art</td>
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socially organized forms of domination, cultural hegemony is endemic in our society (Breckman, 1987; Gans, 1974). In a field study of adults' understanding of art by Stuhr and Leptak (1990), many neighbors expressed a hegemonic sense of conflict between their own aesthetic values and institutionally-validated values.

The artist Jean Dubuffet attributes hegemony to collusion between business and high culture interests. So much emphasis is placed on the prestige associated with art that people no longer see the art itself, only the affiliated prestige, which is allocated by cultural institutions. Prestige becomes the measure of all values—ethical, civic, aesthetic, and financial. Arts institutions seek high prices to generate prestige. To reduce cultural hegemony, art institutions need to reduce the prestige by reducing prices, but business interests would lose from such a devaluation of art. Therefore, business "works at propping up the myth of culture and seconding its authority." (Dubuffet, 1986, p. 29).

The Exclusionary Goal of High Culture

The debate between those who seek to preserve the existing dominant culture and those who challenge that effort is a class struggle over cultural capital (Wolff, 1983). More broadly, the struggle is between the educated and the uneducated, the affluent and the unaffluent, the experts and the laity (Gans, 1974). Having achieved
dominance, high culture advocates can use their self-asserted authority to preserve cultural inequities, assuring their continued higher status.

A paradox of our democratic society is that equality depends on everybody achieving certain standards, but in the art world of high culture, the standards are designed to exclude (Hamblen, 1987; DiMaggio & Useem, 1978). When a large population becomes interested in a product from the high culture, the latter group drops that item from its cultural inventory. As lower status groups reach the exalted standards, the standards change, and the process begins anew, like Sisyphus pushing his rock up the hill (Levine, 1988; Gans, 1974). Dubuffet (1986) claimed that "culture is smitten with counting and measuring; it feels out of place and uncomfortable with the innumerable; its effects tend, on the contrary, to limit the numbers in all domains. . . . Culture is essentially eliminating and thereby impoverishing. (p. 14).

Cultural hegemony is reinforced by the disjuncture between the socialization patterns of major institutions and the life-worlds of various subcultures. Museums, for example, exhibit artifacts exemplifying the one, true aesthetic ideal, conflicting with the aesthetic vision operationalized in the visitors' life-world. The life-world is experienced, whereas the high culture art world is given by institutions (Hamblen, 1987).
Institutional definitions of culture exclude many subcultures. Approved groups can participate in establishing cultural standards, others can only watch (Stone, 1990). Denigration of their own culture through institutional neglect is a gift most subcultures can refuse.

Many scholars argue that differences in aesthetic values reflect broader differences between socioeconomic classes. In the 1899 classic, Theory of the Leisure Class, Thorstein Veblen denounced art as an instrument of status and a tool for social control. Art is possible only for a wealthy leisure class that can contemplate beauty while the rest of society struggles to survive. Art then becomes a symbol of "conspicuous consumption" for publicly asserting dominance over less privileged classes (Veblen, 1953, p. 280). Michael Owen Jones (1973) also states that art confers social status and prestige, admitting appreciative viewers of art into an elite society. Those who fail to appreciate what the elite deem to be true art are left standing outside that society. Art critic Roger Fry (1956) praised galleries for their ability to separate the elite from the masses. By being in the "right" gallery at the "right" time with the "right" attitude, one might eventually join the elite class.
Mystification of Culture

In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger (1972) accuses the fine arts world of "mystification," a form of cultural hegemony. He claims:

The art of the past is being mystified because a privileged minority is striving to invent a history which can retroactively justify the role of the ruling classes, and such a justification no longer makes sense in modern terms. And so, inevitably, it mystifies. (p. 11).

Berger defines mystification as "the process of explaining away what might otherwise be present," treating the artworks as holy relics. (pp. 15-16). High art priests (critics and art historians) are necessary to interpret the divine message to an uncomprehending public in need of salvation. Mystic religiosity is necessary to imbue objects with value because in our mass society, anybody can own a copy of an image or object. In such an age, art becomes the "final empty claim for the continuing values of an oligarchic, undemocratic society." (Berger, 1972, p. 21).

Levine (1988) calls the process of canonizing art "the sacralization of culture." (p. 155). Hauser noted that many people think art "simply pours out of the soul," a sort of immaculate conception (p. 18). Such reverence is not merely naivete; Levine (1988) demonstrates that
awestruck viewers have internalized the aesthetic attitude intended by many arts institutions. For example, in 1922, a Philadelphia Art Museum trustee said "the museum must take the place of the cathedral," and a Boston museum secretary claimed "a museum of art is in essence a temple." (Levine, p. 122). Feeling mystified by what they see, many people are uncomfortable in arts institutions and thus avoid them. In this way, the mystification of culture serves to maintain social stratification by alienating the confused public.

Some artists, finding divine status agreeable, also advocate a spiritual attitude toward art. Abstract expressionist Ad Reinhardt, who spent the last years of his life painting all-black canvases, said:

Someone liking or not liking a painting is beside the point. There's something nice about religious points of view in which the central meaning can't be pinned down. A great many people are trying to have art replace traditional religion . . . . (1991, originally 1959, p. 27).

However, as if rebutting Reinhardt, artist Jean Dubuffet (1986) complained, "the man on the street sees the artist in about the same way as he sees the priest. Both seem to him to be officiating over a ceremony devoid of any practical usage." (p. 23).
Public Tolerance of Hegemony

Blau (1988) and Bourdieu (1984) posit that everyone recognizes the arts as symbols of social inequalities. If cultural hegemony is indeed pervasive, and everybody knows it, some puzzling questions arise: Why do the disadvantaged groups tolerate such conditions? How are an elite minority able to maintain cultural dominance over so many?

Bourdieu (1988) suggests that people of all classes can perceive value in high culture products. But if they do not initially understand certain artworks, due to inadequate education (which is distributed along class lines), they conclude that it is not meant for them. They are not smart enough, not good enough. The cultural standards which exclude them do not seem oppressive because the elite art world has made its criteria seem natural, as if divinely inspired. The lower status groups thus accept cultural inequities as natural, having been educated to accept the values of the dominant social group even without understanding those values (Van Tilburg & Heimlich, 1987). Social conflict theorists would argue that they are the unwitting victims of consensus theory (Rubenson, 1989).

Blandy (1987) and Manfredi (1982) argue that people are socialized to defer to expert opinion in art as in medicine, education, labor, and government. Most people allow others to decide what is art, even when the authorities conflict with their own judgment.
Gans (1977) believes that "the culturally left out are politically passive because they are left out in so many other, and for them, more urgent ways." (p. 117). For example, access to education, medical care, or good housing is more important than access to the fine art world. According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, people must satisfy the physiological need for nourishment and safety needs of shelter and security before they can address any of the needs associated with the arts, such as belongingness, esteem, or self-actualization (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). Because cultural issues are less important than other class issues, people are not accustomed to exerting pressure regarding cultural issues. For this reason, Gans (1977) concludes that our society will not be culturally equal until we are politically, socially, and economically equal.

Participation Studies

Adult education has a long tradition of studying participation, looking at what, where, and why adults learn, as well as barriers that prevent participation. Studies of participation in the arts (known as audience surveys) are more recent, usually initiated by administrators of individual art organizations for marketing research. Comparing data is difficult because each survey is different, but DiMaggio and Useem (1978)
conducted a meta-analysis of 230 audience surveys involving 1200 organizations. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) also commissioned a national survey of the general population on arts participation (Robinson, Keegan, Karth, & Triplett, 1987). Orend (1987) faulted the latter survey for vague questions allowing the respondents to define categories such as "classical music" in their own terms, leaving the quality of participation unknown. Wolff (1981) criticizes audience surveys for ignoring the ideological construction of audiences, but Orend's analysis of socialization in arts participation addresses that problem to some extent. In general, despite the weaknesses in participation studies, they do provide useful demographic data and revealing correlations.

The 1987 NEA study (Robinson et al.) found that participation in the arts correlates positively with socioeconomic status, especially in relation to educational attainment, occupation, and income level. Participation is higher among women than men, particularly unmarried women without children. Young and middle-aged adults participate more than older adults, and whites participate more than other ethnic groups. Older adults are also less likely to participate in creating art. Most significant were the characteristics of education and gender, which could not be reduced by statistically controlling other factors.
Citing an unpublished Ford Foundation report, DiMaggio and Useem (1978) noted that occupation and income level are reliable predictors of audience attendance in the performing arts. Managerial, professional, and other white-collar workers are two to three times more likely than blue collar workers to buy tickets for the theatre, symphony, and ballet, and five to six times more likely to attend opera. Most enthusiastic were teachers, who reported even higher attendance rates than other white-collar workers although earning less income. DiMaggio and Useem attribute teachers' greater interest to higher education and their role as a "curator group" in preserving culture (p. 146).

Manfredi (1982) and DiMaggio and Useem (1978) both found race or ethnic identity unrelated to arts participation. With socioeconomic status (SES) controlled, interracial differences in art participation are minimal. Blacks and whites of the same SES show similar patterns of participation in the arts. DiMaggio and Useem speculate this is due to a conscious desire of the upwardly mobile to emulate upper class tastes. However, the problem with generalizations about "all other factors being equal" is that the other factors are not equal. Education and occupational status are not equally distributed in our society.
Educational attainment as a predictor of arts participations is nearly universal, as confirmed by numerous studies (DiMaggio & Useem, 1980). In an analysis of 108 audiences, DiMaggio and Useem found that persons with advanced education greatly outnumbered those with less. In all but one of 97 audiences, college graduates outnumbered those with high school diplomas, and the percentage of those without diplomas was far below the national average. Whether the context is indoors or outdoors, free or expensive, arts audiences are better educated. Not only are highly educated people the most active consumers of the arts, they are also more likely to create art as members of photography clubs, community theatres and orchestras, choral societies, and similar activities. Bourdieu's studies (1984) of arts participation in France support the American findings.

Surveys of audience attitudes toward the arts found that people with high school or college education were more likely to value the arts, favor government support for the arts, think cultural institutions are important in their community, and support school art programs. These same people are more likely to buy classical music recordings, listen to classical music radio stations, or own original art (DiMaggio & Useem, 1980).
School dropouts are typically cultural dropouts as well. Among persons without high school diplomas, 63% never go to theatre, dance, or classical music performances. Furthermore, 45% reported no favorite art activities of any kind (Dimaggio & Useem, 1980). However, such persons may be active consumers of popular culture, but interpreted the question as meaning fine arts.

**Socialization and Participation**

The National Endowment for the Arts, which commissioned the DiMaggio and Useem study (1978, 1980) and the 1982 "Survey of Public Participation in the Arts" (Robinson et al., 1987), sought an explanation for the differences in participation rates among social groups. Using data from the 1982 survey, Orend (1987) analyzed the relationship between the respondents' childhood and early adult arts-related experiences and their current leisure activities in the arts. Orend hypothesized that variation in participation rates would be related to socialization, the "process by which individuals acquire various orientations, attitudes, and patterns of behavior." (p. 4).

Orend (1987) defined socialization in the arts as any of three activities occurring prior to age 25: lessons in creating any of the arts; appreciation classes; and attendance at museums or performances or listening to recordings. No data was available on quality or quantity of exposure in any of these activities.
Orend (1987) reported found that among adults, 43% had no lessons in the arts, 75% had no appreciation classes, and 60% had not been to a play, concert, or art museum in their youth. Altogether, 30% had experienced no socialization in the arts. On the other hand, 70% did experience some kind of arts socialization between the ages of 6 and 24, but only 16% reported even "moderate" exposure. The older the adults questioned, the fewer who reported who any exposure to the arts when young. Thus, many adults have had no significant art experience and little socialization in the arts, as defined by Orend.

In all of the arts, Orend found a strong positive correlation between socialization in the arts as youth and participation in the arts as adults. Socialization during the college years, ages 18 to 24, is especially significant (DiMaggio & Useem, 1978; Orend, 1987).

Although the participation and socialization studies have related interests in education, they are not directly comparable. Socialization may involve education, or it may not. Classes in creating and appreciating the arts are obviously educational, and many museums and performing arts organizations offer educational activities in conjunction with attendance. However, no one knows the extent to which visitors actually use and benefit from such opportunities. Whereas education for socialization in the arts means specifically education in the arts, audience surveys are
interested merely in level of educational attainment. The people who reported high levels of participation were educated to be lawyers or business managers. The extent of their education in the arts is unknown.

Orend (1987) also conducted an "exception analysis" to determine why some unsocialized adults defy the odds by participating in high culture arts, while some highly socialized persons participate at low levels (p. 96). For example, DiMaggio and Useem (1978) found 1% of all blue collar workers attend opera, and 2% attend ballet (compared to 10% of all teachers reporting opera attendance). What motivates that tiny minority to go to the opera house while their peers play softball or watch videos? Orend found that the unsocialized participants had more education and larger incomes than other unsocialized adults, and were more likely to live in urban areas. Level of income and place of residence, however, are also functions of educational attainment, so again, education is the key to participation in the fine arts world.

Comparison of Participation in the Arts and Adult Education

Robinson and associates (1987) discovered a recurrent phenomenon in arts participation known as "the more, the more." Leisure studies show that the more people attend cultural events such as visiting historic sites or ethnic festivals, the more they also attend arts museums and live performances (p. 7).
One of adult education's more perplexing problems is also "the more, the more." The more education adults have, the more likely they are to continue participating in adult education programs. Consequently, those who are most likely to benefit from adult education are least likely to receive it. Only 3.3 percent of adults without high school diplomas participate in any form of adult education, whereas 28.3 percent of college graduates are involved in a program of continuing learning. Men and women participate in equal number, but young adults participate more than older adults, whites participate more than black or Hispanics, and the well-to-do participate more than poor people. Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) conclude, "To put it simply, affluent, well-educated, white professionals are more likely to participate than others." (p. 121). However, income, occupational status, educational attainment, age, and race are so closely related that causal attribution to any single factor is oversimplification. In summary, research finding regarding participation in adult education and participation in the arts are almost identical.

Adults experiencing major life changes in employment, marital status, or place of residence are more likely to participate in education programs (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). In the arts, DiMaggio (1987) also discovered that "other things being equal, persons involved in major life
changes participate in more cultural forms than persons not involved." (p. 444). Changes broaden social networks, with concomitant exposure to different arts activities.

People who expressed interest in greater participation in the arts reported these barriers, in rank order: cost, time, and availability. Those barriers are all relative to individual contexts and might merely reflect personal priorities (Orend, 1987). The most frequently reported barriers to participation in adult education are also time and costs, but those findings too are vague. Many adults have inaccurate perceptions about actual costs and time commitments. Some adults have also learned to give socially acceptable answers to questions about barriers, finding it less demeaning to report lack of time than lack of confidence or interest (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982).

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) classify barriers to participation into four categories: situational, institutional, informational, and psychosocial. Situational barriers are related to adults' social and physical environment, such as lack of time, money, transportation, or child care. Institutional barriers are created by educational agencies, such as impractical locations, impenetrable bureaucracy, or uncooperative staff. Informational barriers are a lack of communication or awareness. Psychosocial barriers are "individually held beliefs, values, attitudes, or perceptions that inhibit
participation." (p. 137). Adults who say they are too old to learn or were never any good at school are expressing psychosocial limitations. Many studies show that informational and psychosocial barriers are both related to socioeconomic status. Unfortunately, barriers to participation in the arts have not been investigated as thoroughly as in adult education, but the similarities between arts participation and adult education probably extend to this area as well.

DiMaggio and Useem (1978) argue that social classes have distinct aesthetic preferences which are passed through the generations by family socialization. Education, especially higher education, introduces people to other cultural values. Of course, education itself is a function of social class origins, so it too leads to class differences in arts consumption. Other factors, such as ethnicity and age, have some influence on cultural values, but the available data are sketchy.

Cultural Development

Bourdieu (1984), DiMaggio and Useem (1980), Gans (1974), Jones (1988), Lindeman (1961) and many more all regard education as the panacea for cultural hegemony, as a means to overcome social and cultural reproduction. Only Jones and Lindeman advocate adult education specifically. A variety of models are proposed for community-based
education in the arts, which I shall compare using Dubuffet's (1986) framework of hierarchical versus horizontal constructions of culture. The hierarchical approach typifies the liberal-progressive model of adult education, described by Elsey (1986), whereas the horizontal approach epitomizes a radical model of adult education.

Representing the fields of art education, sociology of the arts, public arts administration, and adult education, Zimmerman (1990), Gans (1974), Grosjean and Ingberg (1978), and Jones (1988) respectively describe almost identical alternatives for cultural education, but use different jargon. Each set of related alternatives has its own philosophical basis with implications for educational practice and policy. I will first compare the established scholars' approaches in their own terms. Then, to facilitate clear communication, I will choose one approach for this study and specify the language to be used for describing that approach throughout the remainder of this document. Table 2 displays this comparative analysis in graphic form.
One set of alternatives is a hierarchical, top-down approach to arts education. Zimmerman (1990) describes cultural assimilation as constraining diverse peoples into the dominant culture, blending minority cultures into the mainstream. A similar approach offered by Gans (1974) is cultural mobility, which would provide everyone with the educational and financial prerequisites for choosing high culture, easing them into the dominant culture. Grosjean and Ingborg (1978) call this approach democratization of culture, distributing more widely a cultural capital whose contents are determined by a social elite holding itself responsible for preserving cultural heritage. In this same line of thought, Jones (1988) refers to a policy of cultural socialization that transfers the artistic values of a dominant culture to succeeding generations. Alluding
to William Jennings Bryan's theory of economics, Levine (1988) calls this a "trickle-down" theory of culture, taking care of interests at the top of society while assuming that benefits will eventually reach those at the bottom.

The other set of alternatives is a more horizontal or bottom-up approach (although a truly horizontal system has no bottom). Zimmerman's strategy of cultural pluralism respects and appreciates diverse perspectives, allowing minority cultures to flourish. Gans favors subcultural programming, encouraging and supporting all taste cultures or art worlds equally. Grosjean and Ingberg propose cultural democracy, in which everyone is entitled to acquire culture with full control over cultural content. The French call this process animation socio-culturelle, which translate roughly into English as sociocultural community development. More succinctly, Jones calls this simply cultural development.

Grosjean and Ingberg (1978, p. 62) offer a revealing and detailed explication of hierarchical and horizontal approaches to arts education. With some modification, their comparative analysis is displayed in Table 3.
Table 3
Comparison of Approaches to Arts Education for Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIERARCHICAL</th>
<th>HORIZONTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural consumption</td>
<td>Active participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural heritage</td>
<td>Culture in the making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public limited to an elite</td>
<td>Entire population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture opposed to politics</td>
<td>Culture expresses politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional specialists only</td>
<td>Self-expression for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienation</td>
<td>Liberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passivity</td>
<td>Free expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condescension</td>
<td>Open communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In temples of culture</td>
<td>Among the people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserved for initiates</td>
<td>Open to all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triumph of individualism</td>
<td>Group fulfillment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like the scholars whose theories contributed to this analysis, many art educators (Hart, 1991; Baker, 1990; Wasson, Stuhr, & Petrovich-Mwaniki, 1990; Hicks, 1990; and Hamblen, 1990a, 1990b), believe a horizontal approach works best for arts education. The art educators advocate developing a better understanding of community norms as a basis for school curricula. Such reasoning helps to
justify a study of community aesthetic values such as this
dissertation. However, Gans (1974) argues that although
today's school children will define tomorrow's society,
only adults can actively shape society and culture in the
present. Because of the emphasis on action, education as
something that learners do, I prefer Jones's terminology,
"cultural development." Develop is a verb, denoting growth
and change. In answer to questions about what adult
educators should do, what art educators should do, and what
is it that I do, I can reply: cultural development.

A paradox of hierarchical models is that their
advocates seek to preserve high culture by insulating it
from the masses, while trying to save the masses by
offering them culture. Although high culture is, by
definition, inaccessible to the masses, the elite chastise
the general public for failing to understand. Since the
barriers to high culture prevent many people from
participating, they should be allowed to choose their own
aesthetic standards through cultural development (Hamblen,
1990b; Levine, 1988; DiMaggio & Useem, 1978; Mann, 1977;
Gans, 1974).

Individuals' tastes in culture reflect their general
status in society. Fine arts appreciation is trained, and
the training is unequally distributed among social
classes. Arts consumption is also contextual, and the
context of concert halls and galleries is more familiar to
higher status social groups. Moreover, different rates of participation in different cultural forms enhance group cohesiveness (DiMaggio & Useem, 1978). A majority of the public will choose high culture only when they acquire the other conditions of high status: higher education, income, and occupational opportunity. Such a transformation of society would require a redistribution of wealth not likely to occur any time soon in America. Cultural development would enable people to find artistic activities appropriate for their interests and social status, increasing satisfaction with culture and its relevance to their lives (Gans, 1974).

Cultural development offers choices and cultural reciprocity. Although the fine arts world denigrates other art worlds, cultural development does not seek to supplant the fine arts world. Instead, cultural development would place it on the same menu alongside other art worlds. Hamblen (1990a) emphasizes that opportunities to participate in the fine arts world should be maintained, that it might even be elitist not to include fine arts among the choices available. Failure to acknowledge high culture would limit learners' access to the benefits of dominant culture membership, rather like failing to teach English to U.S. immigrants. People who lack economic capital acquire cultural capital in order to maintain or advance their position (DiMaggio, 1987; Hamblen, 1987).
Cultural development would not deny opportunities for advancement; rather, it would increase opportunities by increasing the range of cultural capital available.

David Baker, past president of the National Art Education Association said, "If art instruction doesn't make sense on our students' terms, it simply won't make sense to them no matter how righteous we are in our curricular postures." (p. 44). Gans (1974) and Dubuffet (1986) employed similar metaphors to reiterate that people are not empty vessels to be filled with whatever ideas and values others wish to pour into them. Attempts to convert and uplift the masses often exacerbate rather than eliminate hegemony, as seen in popular culture stereotypes of highbrow, long-haired, and effete cultured society (Levine, 1988). The consensus among pragmatic educators and other concerned scholars is that even if a hierarchical approach were desirable, it does not work. The remaining alternative is cultural development.

European governments have promoted cultural development for several decades, under the banner of sociocultural animation (Simpson, 1978). In France, administrators of public arts programs are called animateurs. Adopting the emancipatory objective of critical theory, animateurs not only organize disadvantaged groups for development, they also advocate re-educating the cultural elite to free them of their biases. They describe their purposes as
individual and group empowerment for both general social welfare and artistic development. Hurstel (1978), a cultural development leader, does much of his work going door to door through his assigned neighborhoods to establish relationships, learn the character of the area, and determine the people's needs and interests.

Although Grosjean and Ingberg (1978) believe that cultural development is an attitude rather than an activity, they describe a process of "sensitization" to develop awareness of existing conditions needing change. Sensitization is strikingly similar to Friere's (1970) concept of "conscientization" or Mezirow's (1978) "perspective transformation," both familiar concepts in adult education.

Since fine art or professional art world standards cannot be applied to other art worlds, how shall we evaluate the results of cultural development? Gans (1974) proposes these criteria. Cultural programming should:

1. Respond to and express the wants of its users.
2. Offer material and other rewards as an incentive to creators for contributing to a culture.
3. Not harm its users, creators, or the rest of society (Gans, 1974).

These criteria apply equally well to programming in any of the art world alternatives.
Conclusion

Except for the participation studies, most of the literature reviewed in this chapter is normative, theoretical, or rhetorical. There has been little field work and few empirical studies. Scholars discuss fine arts world characteristics as members of that same art world, with all of the attendant biases described by Zolberg (1990). Many of the same scholars attempt to analyze other art worlds with little first-hand experience in those worlds. Although Hamblen (1990a) describes local art worlds primarily as adult communities, she offers only children's drawings of violence as an example of local art activity. In the following chapters, I analyze and interpret ethnographic data collected in an urban neighborhood. The findings contribute toward a more complete understanding of local art world characteristics as a foundation for cultural development.
CHAPTER III
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I developed the research methodology for this study in the context of social constructionist theories in epistemology and sociology. This broader theoretical context is the conceptual framework for the study. Before describing specific methodological procedures, such as sample selection and data collection, I will first explain my theoretical orientation and the concomitant research methodology in relation to other available theories.

The Conceptual Framework for the Study

The conceptual framework of this study is represented diagrammatically in Figure 1. Readers should refer to this figure during the following discussion of the conceptual framework.

The "paradigm revolution" in social science research has been a topic of much debate and discussion among educators. The range of epistemological thinking among researchers is typically represented by a three-part model of inquiry, as shown in the top horizontal axis in Figure 1. The terms used to identify each part of the continuum
The Hermeneutic Dialectic of Critical Ethnography

Participants' Understanding of Art

Researcher's Understanding of Art

SOCIAL THEORY

Figure 1
vary from one writer to another, but the essential concepts remain the same (see, for example, McCutcheon & Jung, 1990; Brookfield, 1989; Merriam, 1988). This overview of tripartite paradigm structure combines the model developed by Pearse (1983) in his adaptation of Habermas's *Knowledge and Human Interests* with McCutcheon and Jung's perspectives on action research (1990).

The **positivist orientation** (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), holds that behavior is objective and testable, generalizable and predictable. Researcher bias can and should be controlled by appropriate methods. According to Pearse (1983), "it is most effective when the objects under scrutiny will hold still and can be isolated into groups for controlled observation. The uniqueness and messiness that are inherent in lived situations tend to be diminished." (p. 160). Because I seek in this study a better understanding of the "uniqueness" and "messiness" of "lived situations," a positivistic paradigm is not applicable to this research.

The **interpretivist orientation** is derived from phenomenology and hermeneutic philosophy. In this perspective, knowledge of the context of the learners' lives is essential to understanding, the intentions of the participants and social relationships are significant, and some degree of interaction between the researcher and subjects is essential. The objective of such inquiry is
situational knowledge, based in the everyday lives of the participants.

The critical orientation "involves a concerted effort to reexamine the taken-for-granted and institutionalized constraints of schooling [learning]" (McCutcheon & Jung, 1990, pp. 147-8). The nature of reality is embedded in problems of equity and hegemony. Events are understood in terms of social and economic barriers to equality.

This study, seeking understanding of cultural hegemony within a local community, shares concerns of both interpretivist and critical theories. Pearse believes the boundary between the two paradigms to be rather indistinct. Anderson describes the methodological application of the combined paradigms as critical ethnography. Critical ethnography represents an intermediate point on the continuum between interpretivist and critical paradigms. As Gary Anderson explains (1989),

Critical ethnography has grown out of dissatisfaction with social accounts of "structure" like class, patriarchy, and racism in which real human actors never appear. On the other hand, it has grown out of dissatisfaction with cultural accounts of human actors in broad structural constraints like class, patriarchy, and racism never appear. (p. 249).
Consequently, "critical ethnographers seek research accounts sensitive to the dialectical relationship between the social structural constraints on human actors and the relative autonomy of human agency" (Anderson, 1989, p. 249).

The lower horizontal axis in Figure 1 represents a continuum of social theory, as explained in chapter two (Rubenson, 1989). Consensus theories of society share the positivists' belief in unity and singularity as the natural order of the universe. At the other end of the continuum, conflict theorists mirror the critical theorists' belief that society (and consequently, social construction of knowledge) is characterized by diversity and divisiveness. Although there is a range of thought between consensus and conflict theory, no significant theory has developed around the midpoint. A bidirectional arrow connects conflict theory with critical theory because their adherents often refer to each other. Positivists and consensus theorists are clearly related but characteristically isolated in developing their theories, so the left side of the figure is not connected.

The hermeneutic circle in the center of the figure should be considered an enlargement of the point represented by critical ethnography on the epistemological continuum. The hermeneutic circle is a common graphic representation of the dialectic process for constructing
knowledge in an interpretivist paradigm. In the dialectic, researchers interact with participants in order to understand the subject from the insiders' or participants' point of view (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Critical ethnography does not hold either the insider or outsider perspective on meaning to be better than the other. Determination of the truth requires thoughtful examination of all perspectives. Having the specialized knowledge of a scholar, the researcher will always be an outsider to some extent, but an empathic researcher adds to the knowledge base by understanding the insiders' point of view as well. In critical ethnography, however, the participants' understanding is not the sole determinant of meaning. The participants' perspective may be mediated by a theoretical framework or other knowledge contributed to the dialectic by the researcher (Anderson, 1989; Masemann, 1986).

According to Anderson, the theoretical framework underlying much critical ethnography usually comes from three related schools of critical theory: feminist research, neo-Marxist philosophy, and Freirean empowerment theory. In this study of community aesthetic values, my critiquing ideology—an outsider's perspective—comes from sociology of the arts. Recent research in sociology of the arts originates in conflict theory concerns about gender, race, and class (Zolberg, 1990). In Figure 1, arrows from the epistemology and social theory axes indicate the
contributions of each to the hermeneutic dialectic of my critical ethnographic study.

A Preliminary Study

Darkenwald (1980) recommends "small-scale efforts in the field" before initiating any major investigation (p. 65). This study is an extension of a project completed Spring Quarter 1988 by students enrolled in a seminar on "Ethnographic Studies in Art and Art Education." Each student chose a neighbor with whom to conduct an ethnographic interview (Pohland 1972) for a project titled "Our Neighbors' Understanding of Art." Questions and interview strategies were devised by the group based on Spradley's The Ethnographic Interview (1979). Students then transcribed their tapes individually, analyzed their data in accordance with Dobbert (1982), and presented their written findings to the class. The professor and I then analyzed the group's data and findings, producing a report of the emergent themes. One of the themes that emerged in the data was the hegemony of socialization over enculturation in the arts. The participants acknowledged art professionals as the "true experts," even while expressing resentment of the experts' influence. Many of these persons maintained another set of aesthetic beliefs which had greater personal value for them (Stuhr & Leptak, 1990).
The research reported here further explores and develops the findings of the Stuhr and Leptak report, using a more sophisticated research design. This study features two elements of continuity missing in the original group project, a single researcher working within a single neighborhood. Furthermore, the participants in the original study were remarkably similar; for example, all had some postsecondary education. For the research reported here, I used a more diverse pool of participants to determine possible patterns of aesthetic preference among various ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

**Italian Village: The Setting of the Study**

Italian Village is one of fourteen neighborhoods officially recognized by the City of Columbus. Each neighborhood has a commission which advises the city council about community affairs. Italian Village is located between downtown Columbus and the University Area, with these boundaries: E. Fifth Ave. on the north, the Conrail tracks on the east (near Sixth St.), I-670 on the south, and High Street on the west. Covering 200 acres, the area has over 850 buildings, housing about 3,300 persons (Tallman, Klose, & Elwakil, 1989).

Land use in the area is diverse. The section of High Street which divides Italian Village from Victorian Village is known as the Short North, a recently revitalized
commercial district of art galleries, trendy stores, nightclubs and restaurants. Zoning laws have limited that section of High St. to commercial use for many years. The easternmost area of the village is industrial. The remaining residential area is a small neighborhood with cramped lots and narrow streets, typical for nineteenth century housing developments. Many properties are vacant or abandoned.

The area had always been home to recent immigrants from many countries, but it was never predominantly Italian. For many years, part of the area was known as "Irish Broadway," and another part was historically black. However, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, built in 1897, attracted many Italians to the area for church services, leaving the impression that Italians outnumbered the Poles, Germans, and Irish. As the immigrants were assimilated into mainstream, middle-class American culture, they moved out to suburbs, leaving decaying streets, houses, and businesses behind. In 1972, the city council designated the neighborhood a clearance area for the development of new low-to-moderate income housing. Neighborhood activists rallied to save the historical character of the area and in 1973, for the first time, called their home Italian Village, emulating the success of another inner city historic area, German Village. In 1974, the Columbus City Council invested the Italian Village
Commission with the power of architectural review, an authority given to only three neighborhoods recognized as having historic value (Eichenberger, 1987). The original community advocacy group still exists as the Italian Village Society.

The Italian Village Commission consists of nine members formally appointed by the mayor of Columbus. Terms last three years. According to city code (Coalition of Italian Village Organizations, 1987), one of the nine commissioners must be a member of Columbus City Council, and two are appointed by the mayor. Another member is recommended by the city council, and five members are recommended by the Italian Village Society, three of whom must reside in, own a business in, or own property in Italian Village. Most (but not all) commissioners live in the village.

The village currently represents a remarkable cross-section of society. Poor blacks and Appalachians live across the street from young upwardly mobile professionals. The homes of elderly immigrants and households handed down through three generations are next to new arrivals attracted by the prospect of rising property values, the proximity to downtown jobs, and the fashionable charm of a historic home (Eichenberger, 1987).

From among the many communities or neighborhoods available as a research site, I chose Italian Village for three reasons. The proximity of the area to the university
made it easily accessible. The diversity of life-styles, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic groups typifies the audiences which local arts agencies attempt to serve, enhancing the study's applicability to other settings. Furthermore, it would be revealing to discover whether diverse people of the area yield comparative data that distinguish between various subgroups in the population.

Data Collection

The primary sources of data in ethnographic studies are interviews, observation, and documents (Merriam, 1988). Some data of each type were collected for this study.

Schwartz and Jacob (1979) recommend observation as an accompaniment to interviews, to determine whether the behavior matches the words, to discern any contradictions. In conjunction with my interviews, I took note of the aesthetic qualities of participants' homes. I saw the exteriors as anyone might walking down the street, and observed any interior rooms and artifacts I was shown during the interview. To respect privacy and personal space, I did not ask to be shown anything not volunteered.

To learn about power relationships, decision-making, and aesthetic issues in the community, I observed meetings of the Italian Village Society and Italian Village Commission during the winter and spring of 1989. In 1990, I attended the dedication of the sideways Mona Lisa mural
at Reality Theatre (Kubera, 1990). For most of the other participants, I was the "complete observer," an anonymous audience member attending a public function. For a few community leaders whom I had approached for advice, I was an "observer as participant," involved in village affairs, but primarily gathering information (Merriam, 1988).

The documents collected include newsletters of the Italian Village Society, clippings from the Columbus Dispatch, the Development Plan for Italian Village (1974), Italian Village Guidelines for Rehabilitation and New Construction (Tallman, Klose, & Elwakil, 1989), and reports about Italian Village from the Columbus Division of Neighborhood Services (Coalition of Italian Village Community Organizations, 1987). The latter provided demographic data, for example. Merriam (1988) classifies such materials as public documents, available to anyone, which may be acquired unobtrusively.

In a study such as this when it is not known how people perceive, interpret, make meaning, or judge the phenomena under investigation, open interactive interviews are most likely to reveal useful information (Patton, 1980). Thus, interviews with residents were the major source of data. The following sections describe how residents were selected for participation and how they were interviewed.
Selection of the Sample for Interviewing

Interpretive research typically uses purposive, criterion-based sampling strategies. The researcher established criteria or standards for subjects to be included in the study, and then sought a sample that met those criteria. Positivistic research, on the other hand, demands probabilistic samples, generalizable to a larger population. Random sampling is the favored strategy for such research. For purposive sampling, Patton (1980) suggests six types strategies for identifying samples, including extreme or deviant, typical, maximum variation, critical, politically important or sensitive, and convenience sampling. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), "maximum variation sampling that provides the broadest scope of information (the broadest base for achieving local understanding) is the sampling mode of choice" (p. 178). For this research, comparing the aesthetic values of the residents in a diverse neighborhood, my goal was maximum variance. The most convenient method for finding such diversity in the neighborhood coincided with a tradition of positivistic research, random sampling. However, unlike positivistic researchers, I did not seek a representative sample, merely a diverse sample. Random sampling was the most convenient method of finding such variance in the population.
To identify members of the population (residents of Italian Village), I consulted the Polk Columbus, Ohio City Directory (1987-88). Households with an Italian Village address and a telephone number were assigned identification numbers, generating a target population of 577 households. I wrote the identification numbers on individual pieces of paper which I drew at random to compile a list of 150 homes to be contacted for participation in the study.

I made the first contact with participants by telephone, so that they would not have to confront an unfamiliar man at their front door. I recognized that my interviews about art would represent an unwelcome intrusion into the everyday lives of some neighborhood residents. In an area with many elderly residents and a rising crime rate, I was also concerned that persons who felt their security or privacy threatened by a young stranger asking for an interview about a rather improbable subject would be unlikely to participate in the study. The initial telephone contact enabled me to introduce myself and my purpose in a non-threatening manner, and allowed possible participants to ask questions and arrange interviews at their convenience. Those who wished to decline could do so without feeling pressured or embarrassed. I kept written logs of all telephone calls attempted and completed, and made brief notes about each conversation, such as reasons given for not participating.
Because information in the city directory is sometimes out of date and incomplete, omitting names of spouses or roommates, I did not know how many adults lived in each household until I made actual contact. I directed my interview request to the first adult who answered the telephone at each house. The definition of adult used in this study is the social role definition favored in adult education: "an adult is someone who has left the role of full-time student (the principal social role of childhood and adolescence) and the assumed role of worker, spouse, and/or parent." (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). Two women who answered the telephone first suggested speaking to their husbands instead. Both men agreed to participate.

When first speaking to prospective participants, I briefly introduced myself and my purpose, indicating that I would make the interview process as convenient as possible by going to their homes at any time. I preferred to interview participants in their own homes in order to observe aesthetic features of the interior living space, but I also expressed willingness to conduct interviews at any place of their choice. Two women were reluctant to allow a stranger into their homes, but they suggested they could come the university, so those interviews were done in my office building. Although this meant being unable to observe the interior of their homes, I thought it was more important to develop trust and create as little disruption as possible in the participants' lives.
I interviewed a total of 28 individuals. Twenty-five households from the sampling frame were successfully contacted with adult spokespersons agreeing to participate. Another three interviews were serendipitous arrangements added to the sample for their contributions to "maximum variance." One participant suggested interviewing his grandmother, an 86-year old Irish immigrant belonging to the working-class population who built the area now called Italian Village. The grandson even offered to take me to her house to introduce us because she would not answer the door for a stranger. This interview was an impromptu application of a purposive sampling strategy called "network selection," (Merriam, 1988) or "snowball sampling," (Ford, 1975) in which interviewees recommend additional participants.

At another house where I had arranged to interview a man, it was obvious that his wife wanted to be included. Because she truly wanted to participate and I recognized her as an officer of the Italian Village Society, I interviewed them together. At a third home, a roommate trying to watch some children spoke more than the intended participant. Because this roommate was an 18-year old single mother and high school dropout, she added another valuable perspective to the sample. I received her consent to participate after the original participant had finished.
Characteristics of the Sample

Among the 28 participants, 17 were women and 11 were men. Five were black, and 23 were white. The age distribution, by decades, follows:

- Under 20: 1
- 20-29: 1
- 30-39: 12
- 40-49: 4
- 50-59: 3
- 60-69: 3
- 70-79: 1
- 80-89: 3

One older person with impaired mobility used a wheelchair.

The level of educational attainment follows this pattern:

- Did not graduate from high school: 8
- High school diploma: 2
- Some college or adult vocational school: 7
- Bachelor's degree: 6
- Graduate degree: 5

For one older woman, schooling had stopped at grade four. Few reported any significant art education before college. Most of those with college educations had taken some arts courses, typically art history. One man who owned a bed and breakfast had a Ph.D. in music history, and a young woman was taking night classes at an art college.
The participants includes representatives from all areas of Italian Village, including the more historical area south of First Avenue, the less reputable area north of First Avenue, the historically black area east of Fourth St., and the public housing project at Taylor Terrace. At the time data was collected, two participants were officers of the Italian Village Society and one served on the Italian Village Commission. Several others had been active in those associations in the past.

Six participants reported they were unemployed, 11 were employed, two were homemakers, and nine had retired. One person identified herself as a professional artist and served as an officer of the Columbus Art League.

Biographical sketches of 28 participants would be excessive, but this simple recitation of demographic characteristics obscures some rich life histories. For example, an 81-year old black man had lived in the same house for 75 years, and still fed and watered a team of polo horses every day. He had set a world track record in high school that lasted twenty years. A 40-year old divorced woman with a high school education was unemployed, but looking forward to a new job managing a restaurant in Italian Village. She was keenly interested in visual arts and dance, but agoraphobia kept her from attending live performances. She acquired most of her art knowledge from reading and watching public television. All 28
participants were fascinating individuals, not soon forgotten. Additional contextual details will be shared in chapters four and five.

Non-participants

Of the 150 households in the sampling frame, 125 did not participate in the study. Fifteen respondents reported that they had moved out of Italian Village, and another 17 said the telephone number was no longer affiliated with either the person or address listed in the city directory. These two groups, a total of 32, were excluded from participation. Another 25 telephone numbers had been disconnected, and three had been changed to unlisted numbers. There was no answer at 11 numbers, even after repeated attempts at contact. A total of 39, then, could not be contacted. Another three were eliminated from eligibility for miscellaneous reasons: one woman said she could not understand me, one man was incoherent, and one respondent said his address was now a business. Altogether, 74 houses or apartments could not be contacted or were excluded from participation, reducing the frame to 76 households.

Forty-six respondents said no. Of those, twelve mentioned illnesses, such as strokes, "I'm on oxygen," and "I'm on a walker." Thirteen said they were too busy or had no time. Seven said they were simply not interested, such
as the woman who said, "I can tell you right now I'm not into art," and hung up. Fourteen had other explanations or no explanations for not participating. Among these, several people confirmed their addresses as the ones listed in the directory, but insisted that they lived on "First Avenue" or "the Short North," not Italian Village. Others, especially the elderly residents of Taylor Terrace, explained that they did not talk to strangers. Some gave vague, but polite refusals such as "no, I think I'll just let it go by."

Of the remaining thirty persons who agreed to participate initially, five respondents changed their minds before the interview began. One woman who had missed a previously scheduled appointment seemed tired and disinterested on the day of the second appointment. She asked to withdraw from the study after reading the information sheet and consent form, commenting "there's nothing in this for me, right?" I did record one bit of data as I packed my materials to leave, asking for the first thing that came to her mind when she heard the word art. She answered, "I think of those greenbacks." An octogenarian resident of Taylor Terrace scheduled an interview after a lengthy telephone conversation about art, her health, and life in Taylor Terrace, but changed her mind when I called from the security telephone as required to gain admittance to the building. One man initially
agreed and requested a reminder call on the scheduled day, but withdrew from the study when called. Two respondents said yes, but there was no answer at the door when I arrived, and follow-up calls were unanswered.

I do not regard the 74 households excluded from participation as non-participants because most of those persons apparently no longer lived in the area, a basic criterion for the study. Excluding those cases still leaves almost twice as many non-participants (46 persons, or 62%) as participants (28 persons, or 38%). I attribute this rate of non-participation to the nature of the subject, the transience of Italian Village residents, and the large number of older residents. Undoubtedly, some people were simply uninterested in whatever they thought I meant by art, or felt uncomfortable talking to a university student. The disconnected telephones and changes in address indicate a high level of transience in the neighborhood. The number of years of residence in Italian Village reported by participants ranged from two and a half to 75 years. A transient area should have many new arrivals, but none participated in my study. New residents have little time to develop a sense of identity with the community, and thus were perhaps reluctant to participate. Furthermore, almost 200 of the 577 households in the Polk City Directory were at Taylor Terrace, a senior housing complex, and I have already discussed the reluctance of
older adults to participate. I felt fortunate to receive participation from seven persons over age sixty, and three younger retirees. A few participants were active in community organizations; most were not. A few were active in the arts; most were not. I am satisfied that the sample I obtained was adequate for my objectives.

The Interview Process

Open interviews are essential for a hermeneutic approach to interviewing, recognizing that the interviewer and respondent are both active participants. The interactive and evolving nature of open interviews allows the researcher to remain "sensitive to the contextual exigencies of the situation in which the interview is conducted." (Pilotta, 1983). I used an "interview guide approach," with the topics and issues specified in advance in outline form. I determined the actual sequence and wording of the questions during the context of the actual interview. This approach increases the comprehensiveness of the data and enables the interviewer to anticipate and close any gaps in the data. In addition to the questions on the interview guide and their follow-up probes, I pursued any relevant topics that emerged during the course of the interview (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1980). For example, if participants mentioned the murals on buildings in the Short North area, I asked how they felt about having
such artwork in the neighborhood. According to Patton (1980), good interviews use open-ended questions, permitting people to answer in their own language. I tried to phrase questions in clear, understandable language, using the participants' own terms and framing the issues with their perspective in mind. For this reason, I avoided all arts jargon such as impressionism or National Endowment for the Arts until the participants used those terms first. Much positive reinforcement was used to encourage the revelation of additional information.

Less structured interviews such as these are most suitable to "access" the perspectives of the person being interviewed" and avoid putting the researcher's categories for organizing the world into the minds of others (Patton, 1980, p. 196). However, my stance as an interviewer remained autocratic (Spradley, 1979). Although I had the endorsement of the Italian Village Society, I acted as an independent agent seeking information to serve my purposes only.

The questions in the interview guide were drawn from the literature and the pilot study. Mann (1977) identifies these questions as the enduring issues in aesthetics: what is art? what is it for? what constitutes good art? who decides these things? by what standards? Although phrased differently, Mann's questions coincide with the interview guide used by the "Ethnography in Art Education" seminar.
Eight of the nine questions below were taken from the seminar's interview guide which had produced revealing interviews for the pilot study (Stuhr & Leptak, 1990), and thus needed little modification for this study. The question about the purpose of art (no. 7) was added from Mann's list to complete the interview guide.

1. What do you think of when you hear the word art?
2. What is art to you?
3. What makes something art?
4. How would you describe your preferences in art?
5. Who decides what art is?
6. Where do you find art?
7. What is the purpose of art? (or)
   How do people use art? (or)
   Why do we have art?
8. Describe some of the ways in which art is a part of your life.
9. Could you tell me about an early experience you've have that you consider an experience with the arts.

The apparent redundancy of some questions was meant to determine whether similar expressions by the respondent actually mean the same thing. Sometimes the answers to the repetitious questions confirmed previous statements, and sometimes they developed a new line of thought and questioning. Reflexive questioning, returning to previous responses, also tested the correspondence between my
understanding of the answers with the participant's self-interpretation (Pilotta, 1983).

The recorded interviews ranged from 17 to 150 minutes in length. The average length was 49 minutes. Some participants renewed the dialogue as I prepared to leave, detaining me on the porch or sidewalk to discuss additional ideas. I kept field notes summarizing those unexpected conversations.

Analysis and Interpretation

In critical ethnography, analysis and interpretation actually begin on the first day of data collection, because interpretation is not "added" to the data. Every act of seeing, doing, and explaining is an interpretation (Stone, 1990, p. 145). However, this section describes the formal procedures I using during the stage known by most researchers as analysis and interpretation.

The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim, which Merriam (1988) recommends as the best method of preparing data for analysis. The data was then analyzed inductively, applying Patton's strategies for cross-case analysis of the data, which he defined as "grouping together answers from different people to common questions or analyzing different perspectives on central issues" (1990, p. 376). Indigenous concepts were used to elucidate key phrases or terms used, such as "creativity"
or "expression." **Sensitizing concepts** were concepts which I brought to the data as researcher, such as "social production of art." **Indigenous typologies** (insider perspectives) were classification systems which arose naturally from the data, whereas **analyst constructed typologies** (outsider perspectives) were brought to the data by the researcher.

An essential component of analyzing ethnographic data is data reduction, which is "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data that appears in the written-up field notes." (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 21). Based on similarities and dissimilarities in the data, categories are formed by either of two methods. The "lumping method" groups similar traits in a set with a title expressing their relationship. The "ideal-type method" groups data items around a typical example expressing that category (Dobbert, 1982). Categories of either type, when found in the sample data, are presumed to represent a broader population: "In the case of an analysis of a category of persons, ... there are characteristic moments in the constitution of the egos of all members of the class." (Streb, 1984, p. 161).

Analysis—data summary, organization, and arrangement into manageable units—is inextricably connected to interpretation, which is "the meaning of observations and the process of making that meaning." (McCutcheon, 1981, p.
5). McCutcheon identifies three types of interpretation: forming patterns, social meaning or thick description, and external consideration (educational criticism, for example). For this study, the most applicable interpretative mode for responding to the research questions is patterning. Some of the patterns may be invisible to the participants, but the research process may enable an outsider such as myself to distinguish them. As the outsider in this study, I was discerned patterns in the group that were not apparent to the participants as individuals. I describe patterns in the insider's thinking with an outsider's scholarly language to indicate the relationship of the participants' ideas to a world beyond Italian Village.

Dobbert (1982) describes four types of patterns, or generalizations:

1. **Categorization** consists of categories supported by a definition and a single example.

2. **Normative Generalizations** give a feeling for the ordinary, as in "owners of renovated homes usually think . . . . . ."

3. **Cluster Generalizations** include multiple positions, the regular and the alternative, the rules and the exceptions, with examples.
4. **Probability Generalizations**, also known as "personal" or "subjective" probability, are "based upon limited samples from an unknown universe. Subjective probabilities represent the likelihood of occurrence in the estimation of a given observer, here the fieldworker." (p. 278).

Ethnographic methods may result in any or all of these types of generalizations, although the objective is usually cluster or probability generalizations because of their greater explanatory value.

**Validity and Reliability**

Critical concepts in evaluating research are validity and reliability, what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call trustworthiness and dependability. Validity is defined as "the degree to which research results reflect a clear, representative picture of a given situation." (Dobbert, 1982, p. 259). Reliability is "a measure of the replicability of the research results." (Dobbert, 1982, p. 259). Qualitative researchers tend to be more concerned with validity because human situations are always changing, making true replicability doubtful. In addition, reliability usually requires a higher level of abstraction, which ignores the particular details which make the situation meaningful for the participants.
Educational anthropologist Harry Wolcott (1990) contends that questions about validity are primarily a positivistic concern, something which need not worry critical ethnographers. Yet, Wolcott concedes that the "specter" of validity or trustworthiness often haunts qualitative researchers, who enact various research rituals such as member-checking to exorcise spiritual validity (p. 127). In this study, I attempted some theoretical manifestation of validity through hermeneutic interpretation. In the process of the hermeneutic dialectic, the received data are analyzed almost immediately, returned "for comment, elaboration, correction, revision, expansion, or whatever to the very respondents who provided them only a moment ago. . . . The opportunities for error to go undetected and/or unchallenged are very small in such a process." (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 244).

Rather than completely dismissing the notion of validity, Donmoyer (1990) redefines validity in the context of qualitative research. The purpose of research is not finding the correct interpretation, but expanding the range of interpretations available. Even Dobbert defined validity as a clear, representative picture, not the picture. According to Donmoyer, ethnographic depiction offers readers an opportunity to learn through vicarious experience, to see through the researcher's eyes what they
might not see otherwise, and to add depth to a theoretical understanding. The latter objective is most applicable to this study, for I share many critical ethnographers' disenchantment with the obsessive theorizing of critical theorists (Anderson, 1989). Readers of this research might judge its validity by the extent to which it enhances understanding of the theoretical constructs reviewed in chapter two, such as cultural hegemony, reception aesthetics, and art worlds within the social production of art.
CHAPTER IV
THE AESTHETIC VALUES OF ITALIAN VILLAGE RESIDENTS

The transcriptions of the interviews are full of such phrases as you know, I think, I mean, as I far as I'm concerned and various idiosyncratic speech habits. As a kindness to readers and the interviewees, I deleted many expressions which helped fill gaps then, but impede communication now. Wildly rambling sentences wander closer to home. Some participants were more reflective, more confident of their art knowledge, or simply more talkative than others. I used their words to represent the ideas and attitudes of others who shared the same thoughts, but express themselves in less eloquent, less readable language. Conscious of my influence in presenting the participants' ideas to others, I have tried to retain the full substance of the respondents' thinking and something of their individual character, even while editing for style and generalizing to the group. I changed the names of participants to preserve the anonymity sought by some.

Dennis Mann identified the essential aesthetic questions as: What is art? What is it for? What constitutes good art? Who decides these things? By what
standards? Art scholars manage to treat these topics as discrete issues, but Italian Village residents cannot. All aesthetic issues become inextricably intertwined. If, for example, someone defines art as things found in museums, then who decides what is art appears to be museum curators. Many people define art as objects or activities that serve certain purposes, merging questions about what art is with how it is used. For many people, the characteristics of good art are the same characteristics that define art in general because they perceive all art to be good by definition. Themes commonly associated with art, such as creativity, expression, skill, arrangement of form, and appeal to the senses are synonymous for most people. Each theme is defined in terms of another one. Beauty, for example, might be explained as appeal to the senses. What appeals to the senses most is expression, which is best conveyed with craftsmanship and originality.

The participants in this study did address Mann's questions, using many aesthetic concepts recurrent in the literature. To demonstrate the variety of perspectives expressed by Italian Village residents, I will present excerpts from the data according to Mann's framework. However, the intrinsic vagueness and ambiguity of aesthetic concepts renders this rubric somewhat arbitrary, since any analysis sensitive to the complexity of the responses must recognize that each bit of data corresponds to several possible thematic categories.
What is Art?

Zolberg (1990) warned that "asking what art is may seem disingenuous since its meaning is usually taken for granted." (p. 1). Among my participants, one woman said, "Art is not something that you usually conceive of as needing a definition. You just either take it that way or you don't." An 86-year old woman snapped that art does not mean much to her "because I don't know anything about art, and if you don't know something about it, why, what the hell's it going to do? You know what I mean?" When queried, "what do you think of when you hear the word art," 18 of the 28 participants immediately referred in some way to the visual arts. A few people first mentioned specific artists such as Michelangelo and Monet, whereas most just said paintings or "pictures." One renegade said sculpture. For a few people, art can only mean paintings and nothing else, whereas most people eventually discuss other art forms. Often, thinking about visual art leads to more general characteristics such as creativity or expression, which then prompts talk about a wide range of other activities. Those who did not focus upon visual arts initially instead offered general aesthetic properties such as beauty or creativity. Even those who personally prefer performing or literary arts identified something else first.
Many participants' description of art illustrates the art as craft theory, defined by a concern for mastery of skill or virtuosity of technique (Collingwood, 1938). The range of skills identified as art by participants ranged from surgery and raising animals to cooking and salesmanship. Ten persons mentioned gardening or landscaping, whereas other possibilities were more idiosyncratic. Eva, a minister, suggested "the art of taking care of a child, taking care of a husband or wife. Lots of people don't know how to love; there's an art to it. There's an art to everything God creates."

In reference to an Italian Village nightclub, several women and one man mentioned striptease as an art. Eva explained, "stripteasing, there's some stripteasers better than others," which is to say, some have greater skill than others. Therein lies the art. But for Reba, who enjoyed ballet on public television, exotic dancing as art is merely a rationalization for an otherwise disreputable activity, debasing true artistic dance.

Eva, age 73, even found artistic skill in soliciting participation for dissertation research: "Otherwise, I probably wouldn't let you in here, but you had an approach which was artistic. I call it artistic because very few people I let in here. But there was something about you that you was not persistent, you just, I want to know and you wanted to know and that was it."
With a Ph.D. in music history, Jim was more articulate than most Italian Village residents. His discussion of art was extensive, as if prepared in advance, and expressed many of the more prominent theories about art. Jim can adjust his criteria for art based on their appropriateness for any given artwork. He valued craftsmanship, representation, organization of abstract form, point of view (expression of ideas or emotions), and above all, ability to provoke thought. In the following excerpt, key words are underlined to indicate the range of Jim's thinking.

In many cases if I see something that I consider to be artistic or art, I have a sense that it was done with care and with quality of craftsmanship. But certainly something that I consider artistic also gives me a different point of view of something. If it's representational and gives me a different perspective or point of view of what's being represented. If it's abstract, the form or the organization of materials or there is a concept which is new or broadening or makes you think about something in a different way or makes you notice something that you hadn't noticed before, so in a broad way both a craftsmanlike approach to creating a thing or group of sounds, plus a concept which is novel, interesting. I care about mainly the strength of my reaction to something and if something evokes a strong reaction, then the art has been successful as far as I'm concerned.

Only two persons specifically mentioned representation as an essential characteristic of art. Hank explained, "if I can recognize something in the painting, then I can get a feel as to what the artist was trying to portray, but if I can't recognize anything in there, then it was just a catch-can attempt." However, representationalism seems
related to expression for some people. Frank, for example, had little regard for skill. More important than skill of execution, "art should tell a story, have meaning, say something." Telling a story, which he emphasized repeatedly, is a communicative or expressive act. However, he criticized modern art as "a bunch of colors put on a canvas," indicating that expression communicated more when it is representational.

Almost the first words out of Tracy's mouth were "I think of art as an overwhelming expression of mankind given circumstances of the moment," a classic textbook definition. A moment later she added, "It just catches my eye as beautiful or not beautiful." Italian Village residents are divided on the issue of beauty, a time-honored but problematic concept in traditional aesthetics. Beauty is usually described today by both academic scholars and Italian Village residents as "pleasing to the eye" or "appealing to the senses." The problem is that beauty can then be defined in terms of other aesthetic characteristics, such as creativity or expression. Many of the people who mentioned beauty then qualified their response, because as Ardith said, "what's beautiful to one person is not beautiful necessarily to another." Frank, an architect and a dance enthusiast, said art must be beautiful, but "that's based upon my experiences in my life and what's gone before." In this
way, beauty is more a function of life history and socialization than a distinct aesthetic principle.

For Jim, beauty was not only unimportant, it was anathema to art because it is less challenging for the receiver.

I appreciate art the most that you don't immediately appreciate what it's trying to do, that it takes work from the viewer. That kind of experience does take study and time and devotion. Getting to the point where you can appreciate that kind of thing that you don't appreciate immediately is very rewarding from an artistic point of view.

The kind of art that Jim preferred, provoking deep thought or strong emotional reaction, is more likely to be repulsive than beautiful. Tracy agreed that "art doesn't have to be beautiful, and it just would be beautiful in my eyes, but it might be in another person's eyes really beautiful. I just think it can appear ugly or express a feeling of ugliness to me, too." Expression or creativity was usually ranked more important than beauty. Hank believed some art "is not beautiful, but yet it is art. As long as it expresses a happening, an event or a thought of somebody, then it is art, regardless of the outcome of what it looks like."

Dissanayake (1988) found "innovatory tendencies" to be a recurrent theme in thinking about art. More than half of the Italian Village participants identified creativity, uniqueness, originality, differentness, or individuality as essential to art. Tracy defined creativity as the
"translation of an individual's ideas into some other form," but most participants explained creativity as making something different, or making something that did not exist previously. In this way, they equated creativity with uniqueness. With apparent pride, two older participants showed me paint-by-numbers projects they had done years ago. Tracy argued that paint-by-numbers or commercially manufactured craft kits are not art because they are not expressive of the individual mind. If, however, purchasers implement their own variations in constructing the work, then it may be art. Potters who pour slip into craftshop molds, for example, are not being artistic, but those who change the curve of the handles on molded pitchers "create their own unique thing." In a study by Durr, Fortin, and Leptak (in press), art students in a senior citizen center often took their ideas from pictures in magazines and other media, but believed they made the paintings their own by modifying the original image. Sharon, a medical technologist who took night classes at an art college, believed it was important "to be able to express yourself individually and not necessarily follow what you're trained to do." Eva thought that artists "have the intellect for creation that nobody else could do but them."

When discussing the age of most museum artifacts, Paul suggested:
Old isn't necessarily a reason that a piece of art is in a museum. The reason there are pieces in a museum is because it was created by someone who has extraordinary talents in being able to express something. If you look at the original Mona Lisa, that was created by a master that I doubt anyone else could ever create again. I mean, there are people who can copy it, obviously, but to the extent that that painting was created, it will never be created again. There is something so unique about that there are literally millions of other paintings but nothing that can really compare to the Mona Lisa.

In this interview excerpt, Paul mentioned skill (extraordinary talent), expression, and creativity, but the most important characteristic is the last one. There is only one Mona Lisa--it is unique.

Most Italian Village residents are primarily arts consumers, but a few participants claim to be active artists. Those who create have a different perspective than users. When interviewed in her studio, Ellen identified herself as a professional artist, a painter, although she admitted she receives little income from her art. Jim, who had a Ph.D. in music history, still performed occasionally, although his earnings come from hotel management. Eva, a minister, proudly announced, "I am a singer," demonstrating a traditional hymn and an original tune. Sharon took night classes at the Columbus College of Art and Design. A few others practiced some art form as a hobby, such as creative writing or ceramics. Creators tend to think of art as a process. Art is something people do. Ellen finds that art is "a way of
looking at things, a way of thinking about things." Kathy believes "art is a way for a person to show their creativity in any form." For Sharon, art is expressing herself, a process, which is not the same as expression, the product. Anna has only a fourth grade education, but takes many crafts classes at her senior citizen center. To her, art is "making things." However, most people in Italian Village, as in the general population, are more concerned with making a good life for themselves and their families than "making things." For them, art is the "thing" itself, to be received or consumed.

What is Art For?

In *What is Art For?*, Dissanayake (1988) observed that people never think about what art is for: "Art is simply there--in museums, in books, and in school curricula." (p. 3). My findings confirm Dissanayake's statement; most people were initially baffled by the question. I often had to rephrase the question several times before it made sense to interviewees: What is art for? What is the purpose of art? How do people use art? Julie, a 36-year old secretary who lives with her mother, said:

I never thought of people particularly using it, other than as a tool, but then sometimes you make tools so that they're almost art in themselves if they balance in the hand well, so that you get a pleasure out of using it, but as far as anything else having a use or a purpose other than to store memory, I wouldn't think so, to be useful in and of itself. That's odd, how do you use art? I never thought of it in that particular frame.
The example of tools as art is unusual, but it has precedence in the fine arts world. The National Building Museum in Washington, DC exhibited tools as art in 1988. Despite her quandary about the utility of art, Julie did offer two common uses for art, pleasure and a stimulus for memory. The problem is that in the fine art world, art is useless by definition. For example, Frank, a young black architect, believed art is "any human expression that's not necessary. It's an enrichment to life that's not really necessary to life." In the fine art world, utilitarian objects decorated with carvings or paint might be considered folk art, evocative of some quaint, simple lifestyle, but never just art.

Only Reba, an unemployed beautician, preferred art as amusement (Collingwood, 1938). For her, art was "something that's pleasant, something that takes me away," but she uses the beauty of art as a means of coping with depression. The therapeutic connotation is more indicative of art as magic or utilitarian purpose.

Parker, a psychologist, offered his own version of Collingwood's (1938) theory of art as magic.

Art is an attempt to be a representative for or control the tremendous confusion of the world. Maybe it continues on a real basic level to be soothing in some sense. It modifies the world that you live in and makes it, for lack of a better word, nicer. It beautifies, it soothes, or at least it can.
Tracy also thought that "art can be a way of getting your mind off other things ... and a way of interacting with the world, a way of connecting the mind with the universe." Many less cerebral participants agreed that "art makes people more comfortable."

Vicky, who had just finished a bachelor's degree in special education at age 39, confirmed that art is indeed soothing and essential in her life-world:

I see it down the street from house to house. I create art in my own yard with my flowers. I've been vandalized twice this year in a couple months time, but there is also beauty here. There are people striving to bring art into a central focus and it's neat, because whenever I'm bored or depressed, I just walk down the street and look at the beauty and I go, this is really neat. So it can kind of be an uplifting experience.

Vicky strongly believed that others would benefit from the arts as she has. Art "establishest meaning in one's life. It keeps me going, a reason to live, so I find it very, very important. People who are impoverished and struggling in the day to day living need to be exposed and need to experience art forms." She conjectured that more art education is needed, because children with "feeling for nature and self and beauty" would not feel a need to vandalize their environment. Eva, a black apostolic minister, asserted that "if it wasn't for art, we'd be dead." Art is "for living and breathing and wanting and loving. It serves every purpose I know of."
Parallel to Dissanayake's thesis (1988) about artmaking as a distinctive behavior of the human species, Sharon proffered art as "the nature of human beings. I don't think cats go out and make art or anything like that." Julie added that art is necessary because "it gives us some way of organizing the world or perceiving the world. I don't think there's anything with cognitive ability that doesn't perceive art or make art out of something. It's probably just a function of living." Although Julie had only one year of college (divinity school), her observation is remarkably astute. According to Dissanayake, "organizing our understanding of the world" is precisely how art contributes to the survival of the human species.

Four older and at least three younger participants associate art with age or the ability to evoke times past. Helen, who used a wheelchair and seldom went out, suggested "it's a memory behind that art, the beauty of it, and why it was made or created in the beginning. If I didn't have these memories in art, I'd lose it." Her art collection consisted of handmade dolls collected over the years, many of them gifts from family and friends. Charles gestured around the walls of his den, covered floor to ceiling with photographs and artifacts from his horse racing days, saying "this is my art gallery. This is my place of reminiscing." Julie, in her thirties, seemed to speak for her older neighbors when she explained the purpose of art
is "to record an experience, in memory, to preserve the essence of a moment. Art is also experiential, so that you have some way of remembering what it was like at that instant."

In an old neighborhood such as Italian Village, historicism and aesthetics are closely related. Many of the younger residents chose to live in Italian Village because its antiquated appearance seems more artistic to them. The houses show an individual craftsmanship which is rare today and differs from their friends' suburban tract homes. When describing Italian Village (which she thought was somewhere else), Eva said "there's an art to every one of those houses that's distinctive to any other, just like this old house. This is near a hundred years old and you can't get a nail hardly through it. It's all oak, and I say there was an art to building it, there had to be."

Not only are older things the products of greater skill, but the uniqueness of historicity also facilitates another use for art, self-expression. Mike, a 30-year old laborer for the county, is restoring an old house and collecting antiques because:

They're different. We're not from a time right now that you can go out and purchase something like that, like everyone else's furniture. You don't see many such things. The people of our age, it's traditional stock furniture, all their belongings, and that's why I'm kind of different. I like to remain not so much different, but stand out a little bit.
Mike was creating a unique environment and reflection of himself. His taste in housing and furnishing distinguishes him other "people of our age." By locating himself in historic surroundings, he expressed his own personality to the community and established his identity within that community.

A doctoral student in psychology, Sean suggested several other uses for art, dividing them between uses for creators and uses for consumers. Creators use art to make a living, to express themselves, to influence people socially or politically, or to educate the public. Consumers might use art for intellectual or spiritual fulfillment. Art might also be used to "to show off, I have these sensibilities or I can afford this or whatever, so it's used as an extension of the self, perhaps, in some sort of self display, augmenting self."

Tracy, who had done graduate study in anthropology, agreed that the purpose of art is to express the self, but furthermore, "it's the expression of values for the whole culture." The extension of self may explain residents' sensitivity to the commission's guidelines for renovation. Applicants feel criticism of their taste in windows, for example, as criticism of themselves, a personal affront. The village commission, on the other hand, is less concerned about individual expression than collective expression as a community culture. Sean also suggested
that art contributes to social cohesiveness, as "a focal point for a group of people that allows them to have a shared experience. If we go to look at something together, art allows us the possibility of shared experience."

Sociologist Paul DiMaggio (1987) believes that art is used to establish and reinforce identity within social groups. As a shared experience, art could reinforce a sense of community, which is part of the rationale for a uniform architectural code in Italian Village. Chapter V will say more about cultural hegemony in the community.

What Constitutes Good Art?

The residents of Italian Village seldom distinguish degrees of quality. The common use of art as an honorific makes bad art an oxymoron, because if something is art, it must be good. Two women stated this position directly. Reba said "to me it's art and not art." She continued: "It might be good, a good work, but to me that's not art." She could acknowledge institutional validation of "good," but amended that designation with her own, opposing viewpoint. Julie agreed that "if I like it, it's art, and if I don't, it's not," but she allowed for other opinions. "It's all in the eye of the beholder, mostly, and it's something that's extremely individual." Jim had an all-encompassing view of art that enabled him to distinguish good from bad, but whether judged good or bad, everything may be regarded as art.
I'm certainly willing to make a value judgment of my own personal decision as to whether something is good or not. But I don't think that it's important to be able to classify things into the category of art. This is art or this isn't art.

Tracy's perspective was typical of Italian Village residents, who thought bad art was just plain bad, beyond the scope of their art world, but they acknowledged the possibility of value for others. The general thrust of most participants' talk about art was "that's art, that's not."

Many people thought that time was a good judge of quality in art, believing that the best art endures. Don, for example, recalled dramas that were originally panned by critics, but received acclaim twenty years later. Other plays were hugely popular when they opened, but have been long since forgotten. Several people mentioned Van Gogh as a great artist who was validated through time. Sociology and social histories of art are replete with similar examples (Becker, 1982; Levine, 1988). Modern art, the villagers argue, will be judged best by future generations.

Jim thought that good art has complex, multiple meanings. For example, "You don't get tired of a Beethoven symphony because there's a lot there for the academic as well as for the casual listener, and art is the same way."

Ellen, the only professional artist in this study, explained "there are many, many ways out there." She even finds art in such practical applications as dental tools:
As the dentist is trying to work on my mouth with a tool, I'm feeling an awkwardness and the dentist is perhaps feeling a frustration, and I think, how would you design something that would do this kind of job that would be comfortable for the dentist and also the patient? Those kinds of applications are artistic ways of dealing with a thing.

Sean and Frank did not accept utilitarian objects as art, but most others, like Ellen, found practical considerations to be appropriate criteria for art. A rocking chair is poor art if does not rock smoothly and support the body properly.

Who Decides What is Art?

Only one person, a single mother on welfare, maintained that artists themselves decide what is art. Several others indicated that the artists' intent should be one among many criteria to consider as individual audience members form their own judgment. Anna, who dropped out of school in the fourth grade to help her mother, thinks that "teachers, they probably decide and they probably teach it to other people." In contrast, although Ellen creates art, she believes that "art is just not necessarily about the creator. It bounces off the viewer or an audience, so it has an infinite number of interpretations, depending on the viewpoint." Will added that "our human mind decides what art is, or conscience or whatever you call it."
Tracy spoke for many in her local art world when she said, "each individual's perception of what they're viewing determines whether or not it's art for that individual. In general, anything can be art." Yet she also believed in some kind of group consensus, of majority rule for public art selection:

You've got to have some sense of the majority. I don't think it's right for one person to pick a picture just because they love it and say, I don't care if the rest of the world hates it, this is what's going to go at the airport.

Helen agreed that art may be a matter of social consensus:

It takes my thoughts and your thoughts to kind of draw it together, and we are the public and the critics because you have a good artist and he can have ever so many gorgeous paintings, but if the public don't think that they're so nice, that's up to them.

However, many Italian Village residents also resented opinions imposed by others, a problem to be explored in the next chapter.

Sharon complained that collectors had too much influence in her professional art world: "It's like the collector saying [this is good art] and somebody gets hyped up, and the collectors have to have their art, right, but I don't agree with the reasons involved." She attributed their disproportionate influence in the media to money: "You sit down and look at Art News and you say, I don't believe half of this stuff. This is the people that had the money to put the pictures in the magazine."
The villagers were almost unanimous in agreeing that
determination of artistic quality is an individual
decision. Reba authoritatively asserted:

Everybody has a right to their own opinion, their own
form of art, and even if I don't understand it, whether
it be political or if they're doing it for shock value,
I think that's their choice. I may not like it, I may
not appreciate it, but that's their choice.

Charles, an elderly black horsekeeper, stated "the art I
don't like maybe you like, but I don't condone or
contradict your opinion. I tolerate your opinion." Mike
agreed that all opinions are equal: "None of them's better
than the others. Everyone should be able to have theirs
and have their opinion said." Ardith, a middle-aged woman
semi-retired from real estate sales, added that "you have
to have an open mind to appreciate art. Just because you
don't like everything doesn't mean that it is not art."

Ellen, an artist, thought that just as a god created
the world, artists create their own world.

I tend to believe that we're made by a creator and that
in that image of the creator we are also kind of
mini-creators. We emulate that, we create our own
ideas and ways of expressing things, be they through
words or images or any number of ways of communication.

Whereas Ellen saw divine elements in artistic creation,
Eva, a minister, perceived divine qualities in artistic
reception: "I believe God gives an individual, if he
listens to God, [the ability] to decide what art is. See,
the whole kingdom of God is within man. Now, if the
kingdom of God is in man, the God-in-you will decide."
Artists and their peers in the fine arts world are creator-oriented (Zolberg, 1990), but the local art world is receiver-oriented.

By What Standards?

Helen believed that to judge art, "you would have to know a bit of the history of something," and "sometimes you have to know the little stories behind things to really appreciate it. Sean was interested in the artists' intentions, "you would have to ask the person who created it to tell you why he did it." Frank echoed the voices of many participants when he said "I don't always have to like it, but I have to understand why they did it." For these persons, meaning resided not in the artwork alone, but in the context. When they lack sufficient contextual information, "it doesn't mean anything to me."

Craftsmanship or skill was often mentioned as an essential characteristic of art. Craft requires planning, time, and effort, and many people expect those qualities to be evident in the final product. Kathy, a department store sales manager, said, "something that is done haphazardly is not really quality art. Something that is done and a lot of time has been spent on it, is a better piece of artwork." Her husband, who spent much time restoring their house, considered himself a craftsman, which he believed is a form of art. Helen argued that an artist "got to have
the frame of mind and a certain amount of skill." Jim, a musician, explained craftsmanship with examples from the visual arts:

Doing something well, using materials well or painting. If you're going to paint a mural, but the proportions are good and the colors are good and if it's intended to last, that it's painted with materials that are lasting, and the colors are mixed well and blend well and match well, a workman, or someone who has obviously practiced a lot or refined a technique. I guess that's what I mean by craftsmanship.

Although Jim recognized and valued craftsmanship, he did not consider it essential to art: "Something with bad craftsmanship, I wouldn't discount as being art. It would just be the concept which is novel or interesting and it may not have been carried out in a craftsmanlike way." Innovation and ability to provoke "deeper thought" were more important.

Jim recognized a wide range of aesthetic standards, choosing criteria based on their appropriateness for each artwork. In this description of pottery as art, he demonstrated this ability to match his standards to the work:

I don't have a problem considering some piece of pottery as being art, it's art in a different way than an oil painting. It takes more craftsmanship than creative genius to create a pot. Nevertheless, the form of a pot can be terribly long lasting and timeless and make you see form, make you appreciate form that you might not have realized before or made you see proportions and a shape that you appreciate.

In a mere vessel, Jim could perceive skill, timelessness, and unique form.
Many people could recognize more artistic value in a pot than in modern art, which usually means abstract art. Modern art receives little enthusiasm because "it doesn't seem to take a lot of time to create that, it doesn't seem to be a great deal of effort." The average person perceives no evidence of skill in abstract art, or as Charles said, "modern art and design, I'm kind of back on that."

Sean spoke at great length about "artistic impulse" and "animating forces," the motives for creating art. These animating forces are quite vague, but they definitely do not involve money, because "if it's commercial, I wouldn't primarily define it as a work of art, although I might say something works beautifully according to many of the precepts of what makes art. But I wouldn't characterize it primarily as art if I didn't believe it was inspired by some animating experience." Somebody "sitting back cranking out posters" lacks an animating experience.

Parker also complained that financial value is a poor measure of aesthetic value:

[Art brings] something into your life that's meaningful, on the broadest level, and you happen to enjoy that and get some positive visceral or intellectual experience about it, that should be enough. I'm not sure that anyone should pay $10,000,000 or whatever for a Van Gogh, but I think that's a whole different level of what art is about. When Van Gogh painted the painting it had nothing to do with being somebody's idea of a good investment.
Although Italian Village residents were well aware of the money spent and earned in the arts, they believed financial motives to be incompatible with aesthetic motives, which were more important.

The Primacy of Aesthetic Reception

What Italian Village residents value most is individual choice, which has been a recurrent theme throughout this chapter. The often repeated cliche, "art is in the eye of the beholder," epitomizes the primacy of individual aesthetic reception in the local art world. Vicky, for example, thinks that the consumers are more important than artists in making aesthetic judgments:

It's already almost predetermined. Yet, it's not always the ones that so-called 'know' art, experience it, draw it, whatever, can really decide what it is. The people they're developing the messages for are the ones that really should make the ultimate decision on whether it's art or not.

The most influential people, she suspects, are "probably a group of minds that claim they are artists." Parker added, "because we live in the world we live in, it's determined by supposedly experts." However, neither Vicky nor Parker gives any credence to the experts acknowledged by society. They are their own experts.

In the local art world, art is not made by artists, is made by "the person perceiving the situation or the object." Italian Village residents firmly believed in
reception aesthetics, relying upon "the old standby of beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so it's the viewer rather than the artists or the piece itself that makes it art."

Reba vigorously defended the right to make her own aesthetic choices: "Just because you say it's art, I shouldn't take your word for it. Because you tell me to paint my room white, that doesn't mean I have to do it. I think everybody should make that choice." She was extremely of critical of anyone interfering with that right, such as the professional art world:

Everybody should be included in the process. Of course, it doesn't trickle down. It's always the higher-ups, the higher class people, because if you were an artist and you were well known, who are you going to associate with? You're going to associate with the people who are going to buy your paintings and if you want to keep on pleasing them, you may at times take their advice. If you want to keep that clientele, that's your point to either paint like they want or incorporate into your paintings what they feel and say, because like you're doing your dissertation, you're getting ideas, they get ideas, too. How many people would you say go to West Virginia to talk--if you're a major artist, they're not paying your bread and butter, they're not buying your $2,000-$4,000 paintings.

Frank, a young black architect, also found little aesthetic value in the work promoted by the fine or professional art worlds. He blames the usual cast of art world characters, revealing an astute awareness of the social factors in art production. Like sociologists of the arts, he rejects the notion of inspired, solitary artist-genius.
I appreciate people who sincerely create what they feel compelled within them to create, but there's so much art that is based on promotion and advertising and being seen and a lot of dilettantism in the sense of not every artist that's a known artist actually creates what you see. I don't care for that, and yet it's always been around in art, so a lot of artists that create are actually editors rather than creators and somehow that goes against the grain of what I learned about art in school and it makes me uncomfortable. It doesn't seem honest somehow. Some artists, and I don't know if it's the artists or the people who work with them in the art profession like gallery people, critics, that sort of thing—I frequently wonder what their point is, and who gets chosen and who doesn't get chosen, that sort of thing.

Both Reba and Frank understood the social production of art, in same sense as academic scholars such as Becker (1988) and Wolff (1981). Like the sociologists, they argued that role as consumers deserved greater attention from the fine arts world.

For many Italian Village residents, "art is everywhere." Six persons used those exact words, and many more indicated equally expansive thinking about art in the breadth of their responses. For example, when recalling early experiences in arts, Helen described the drama of a country baptism and Hank recounted the remarkable skills of Rose LaRose, a burlesque queen who could twirl her tassels in opposite directions. Charles believes art "fits into everyday doing, everyday life. Art helped make these shoes, those glasses you're wearing, there's an artistic bearing there. Everything you do, your mere presence amounts to that. This is what I want in this house--this is my art."
Many would agree with Don's assessment that "you can find art walking down the street." The participants in this study would interpret that statement many ways. While walking down the street, they might see art in architecture, landscaping, or signage. They might see art on other people walking, manifested in their clothing or hairstyle. Finally, some might be perceive art in the activity of walking itself, the pattern of muscular movement, the kinesthetic contact with a surface. As Charles said, "Anything can be art. You can make art out of living."

For many people in the local art world, art is not only affected by life experience, art is life experience. As Parker explained over a bowl of breakfast cereal:

Art is any human creation in terms of modifying the world, modifying things that are given and then taking some human perception, understanding, interest, and then beginning to create something which is different than what's presented. From my point of view, there's art on the level of just how a person creates their own life and has it presented to the world. More technically, art is a defined profession in the world that we live in. [But] individually, we're all artists in some sense. On the broadest scale it has to do with how you make choices about what to include in your life and and what you exclude and then what you do with those inclusions and how you arrange them.

When art is perceived as the experience of living, all persons are artists, and there are no experts. Each individual determines the aesthetic characteristics of his or her own life. The older residents were especially likely to use their own lives as examples of art,
exhibiting all the characteristics attributed to art in this local art world: skill, creativity, expressiveness, and above all, individuality.

If art may be perceived anywhere, anytime, by anybody, art exists in the individual act of reception. The fine arts world values individuality in creation (Zolberg, 1990; Wolff, 1981), but this local art world values individuality in reception.
Hegemony is the influence of one social class over another. Cultural hegemony is the power imbalance manifested in aesthetic issues. As might be expected from the range of aesthetic values described in the previous chapter, conflict does occur in Italian Village. Some conflict occurs openly between opposing factions. Other feelings of conflict are carried privately and seldom expressed directly. This chapter reviews instances of both external and internal conflict found among Italian Village residents.

Conflicts about Property Rulings by the Commission

In a historic neighborhood such as Italian Village, the process for expressing and resolving conflicts about its aesthetic appearance is ritualized in the form of commission hearings. The commission is authorized by the city to rule on the appropriateness of property renovation, demolition, or development, as well as public art and graphics.
At the first Italian Village Commission meeting I attended, one of the applicants was a man about sixty, an immigrant, who had been cited by a city code enforcement officer. He owned some residential and commercial property which he had already modified, apparently violating village standards. For example, he had paved a parking lot without the required green space buffer, and he had erected a chain-link fence. The parking lot might have violated zoning regulations anywhere in town, but the fence rule applies only to the historic neighborhoods.

The applicant was frustrated because he had already spent time and money to make these changes, which he believed to be improvements. He thought he had done the right thing. The commissioners seemed equally frustrated, because no matter what they said, he could not understand what was wrong with his changes and that changes need to be approved first. Trying to restrain his anger, he protested in his European accent, "When I come to Italian Village, I just want to make things beautiful, I no want to make a mess." He left the meeting, still not understanding what he had done wrong, and still under orders to bring his property into compliance with the code. The problem, of course, was that his idea of beauty conflicted with the commission's idea of beauty. Both sides had the best intentions. When I told a commissioner that I found the entire exchange revealing, he replied, "I can't tell you many times we've
heard that same comment." He attributed this particular applicant's problem partly to bureaucratic error:

Somebody downtown had already given him the approval to do what he wanted to do up here, and he already thought he was OK, and it's another case where the city screwed up, which complicated his frustration because he didn't understand what we were about, he didn't understand the procedures and somebody downtown didn't want to deal with him because the guy couldn't speak English.

The commissioner offered even more examples of city workers issuing building permits without commission approval, and other stories about contractors who had mislead property owners about what was acceptable in the village. In either situation, the city attorney maintains that property owners are responsible for meeting the costs of the double renovation.

Another woman described her only visit to a commission meeting soon after moving to the village. A homeowner who wanted to put French doors on his second floor to enhance his view of downtown met with disapproval.

The guy said, I've come down here with my proposal and my ideas and I want to keep the house basically the way it is, but I tell you what, you people don't pay the taxes, and he got up and walked out. My neighbor said, you mean to tell me that you're going to tell him what he can do to his house he's remodeling and going to make look nice and going to upgrade the neighborhood, but you won't do anything but think about the people who are running slums. Well, that's the housing code down there, but they can tell me what kind of fence I can put up? They can tell me what kind of exterior I can have?

Again, all parties involved had good intentions, but no agreement was likely.
At another commission meeting, an applicant proposed that his aluminum siding would be blue, trimmed in white. One of the commissioners, holding up a swatch book, said he thought gray would be better than white. The homeowner jotted that down, saying gray would be fine. Startled by such acquiescence, I later asked another commissioner about extent of his authority. He explained that people can choose any colors from an approved list, and beyond that, the commission can only offer suggestions. However, many property owners, intimidated by the commission and eager to please, interpret suggestions as mandates. The commissioners seem insensitive to their perceived power over others, and seldom bother to clarify the intent of their comments.

Hank recounted a similar situation, to which he added some historical insight. Like other village residents, Hank thought the commission chose colors over the applicant's objections.

At the one meeting I went to when I went out to get approval for my garage, they were dictating to the property owner the colors that he would use. And to me this wrong for this reason. In the days when this was Italian Village, you had the railroads, the steam locomotives, so consequently, white was not normally used because you would be constantly repainting. It isn't that the Italians didn't like bright colors, because they do, so to keep a community drab looking is ridiculous. They were only drab because of necessity in those days because of the railroad dirt, but now that that element is gone, color up the place, because most Italians love color.
The Italian appellation puzzles many people, including Hank: "Why they call it Italian Village, I'll never know anyway because the Irish were here first."

Mary, an 86-year old Irish immigrant who retained a bit of an accent, was most upset about the "Eye-talians" who told her what kind of windows were permitted. She has lived in the area now known as Italian Village since she emigrated in 1920 to escape the Black and Tan Wars. She explained,

This whole four squares, nothing but Irish, and now the damn Italian Village has taken over and you can't get what you want. I think it's terrible. I ordered windows for my house. The builder was stuck with them. They wouldn't let him install them, they didn't go with the neighborhood.

With great pride, she added, "I came out here in 1920 and before that time it was Irish people that lived here and since that time it's Irish people have lived here, and the Irish are very artful people." Her grandson, Mike, had also received objections over his renovations so he was studying a neighbor's copy of the guidelines (Tallman, Klose, & Elwakil, 1989) to avoid further problems.

Even people who live within the official boundaries of Italian Village think it is somewhere else, comprising only a few city blocks. Several residents who lived on the less fashionable northern side of the area spoke of Italian Village as "over there." Other residents would not participate in the study because they did not believe
they lived in the village. Until recently, Mike had
ignored village affairs because the area he perceived to
be architecturally significant was further south:

   Go look at the brick homes down on Warren Avenue.
   That's what I would really consider Italian Village,
   they have their cornices and their lattice work and
   things like that. Where you see that type of
   structure in the homes, is down there on Warren and
   Hamlet.

Even some the people who have been active in community
organizations think the area's historical significance is
exaggerated. Ardith owned a restored home and generally
supported the concept of Italian Village, yet she said: "I
don't think Italian Village in itself has any great
architectural marvels in it, so all I'm asking of the
commission is they use taste."

Hank, a retired government worker, looked forward to a
confrontation with the commission. He owned a garage
nearby that he did not plan to paint although he knew it
needed improvement: "Now they may fine me, but it would be
worth the fine to tell them to go piss up a rope." He
added,

It's all right to have a commission and if you're
going to have a community and set a policy, fine, but
don't be so damn restricting with it that nobody does
anything, because if I had a house, it would be
painted light blue because blue is one of my favorite
colors and if that's what I wanted, that's what it
would be. They might tell me I can't, but I'd do it
anyway.
Hank's belligerent pride helps mask concerns about his limited retirement income: "It isn't always that you have the money to do what the Italian Village insists on you doing." Several participants suspected that the historic preservation regulations inadvertently contribute to the deterioration of the neighborhood as property owners delay repairs until they can afford to meet the requirements. As Hank explained,

> The old door stays, and it might be falling off the hinges, but he doesn't have the money to do the kind of door they want. Yet he had a perfectly good door he could have put on there, and it would not have distracted from the building very much.

Many participants commented on the dilapidated condition of buildings in Italian Village. Mike complained about being cited for a code violation during his renovation, while buildings all around him fell apart from neglect. The city, not the commission, is responsible for enforcement, but lacks the staff and legal resources necessary to force negligent absentee landlords into compliance. Consequently, residents perceive that owners who allow property to deteriorate are ignored, while those who try to improve conditions feel obstructed.

Ardith, who renovated her home and generally supports the concept of Italian Village, still has some reservations. She complained, for example, about the problems that the commission created for "that poor Catholic church," which had requested permission to demolish an unused structure.
I'm not sure that I'd be against someone having a vacant lot around here, building a very modern looking home on it. I don't think the commission would allow it, but I don't see anything dreadful about that because I don't think there's any special architecture in this area.

Ardith reiterated the importance of flexibility "for the area to grow and prosper." If the village commission wants the improve the area, "they better start mixing it up and try not to think they're the only people that know." Many residents believed improving the neighborhood would be assisted by allowing greater variety. As Hank said, "if you want the community to become something, you have to bend a little."

Although many residents criticized the commission's decisions, they all believed in maintaining some kind of standards. Ardith advocates architectural pluralism, but she would not approve of purple houses. Hank "wouldn't go along with somebody checker boarding a house," but "as long as somebody is attempting to improve a property and living conditions," he thought the commission should be more supportive. Most renovations were acceptable in his view of the neighborhood: "I haven't seen anything that's been so outrageous that it didn't add to the community. Most people use common sense, but I don't feel that some of the people on the commission are using common sense."

As usual, people perceive their own thinking to be common sense, which is ironically lacking in the rest of the
population. Both the commissioners and their opponents believe their own standards are perfectly obvious and representative of the tastes of the majority.

According to Tracy, who served as an area commissioner during the early years:

In most cases we share a common vision of what the neighborhood was about and what kind of an image the neighborhood wanted to retain or present, so that no one had to write down that you will never paint your house flamingo pink, right? It was just something that was obvious to everyone that unless it was a very unique situation where it would be aesthetically appropriate, people just knew you don't paint your house flamingo pink because it doesn't fit with the genre, it doesn't fit with nineteenth century brick homes.

Tracy argued that group decisions are better than individual decisions because more people are likely to be satisfied by the outcome, but she recognized that conflict is inevitable: "Where one person makes that decision you have problems because not everyone agrees, no matter who makes the decision, and even if a group, there are always going to be some people that say, now that's not art. So whenever it happens you're always going to have problems in terms of how to deal with that."

Although no longer actively involved in community affairs, Tracy had served as a village commissioner during the 1970s. She knew from the beginning that not all of the residents supported Italian village.

It wasn't the whole neighborhood either. It was those of us who had an image of the neighborhood as community, as a unified thing, and not everyone who lives there feels that way. A lot of folks have been
there for fifty years or more who think the whole thing is a big joke and is ridiculous.

Nonetheless, Tracy and the other community leaders tend to think that some kind of consensus is possible. They trust that as a group, they can determine what is acceptable to the majority.

The commission doesn't always agree within itself, but what happens is that in most cases we all share a common vision of what the neighborhood was about and what kind of an image the neighborhood wanted to retain or present, so that no one had to write down that you will never paint your house flamingo pink, right? That would not be appropriate because it doesn't fit with the genre, it doesn't fit with nineteenth century brick homes.

Tracy offered another example of architectural renovation that seemed obviously inappropriate to her, something she assumed all rational persons of good taste would agree upon.

If you look at the aesthetics of the original design of the home and knocking out the two windows in the front of the house that have the ornate windows and everything and then putting in boxy, small picture windows that aesthetically do not go with that original design, it's like when you're listening to an orchestra and the French horn plays the wrong note and it's not even in the right chord, and you just wince, right? Everyone, or most people would agree that it doesn't fit. Unfortunately, often the homeowner is not looking at it in terms of aesthetics. They're looking in terms of cost and what they can afford.

Money seems inextricably related to aesthetics in Italian Village.

Tracy thought attitudes had changed since those early years, as a more affluent social class assumed leadership in the community.
The folks who really had a strong sense of community are not the vocal minority or the majority at this point. There have been a lot of folks who have come in and have seen the neighborhood as an investment and so some of us have just pulled out of any activities that are going on there because it isn't that, they were there for that sense of community and that's gone.

Disillusioned by the declining "sense of community," Tracy said she and many others had dropped out of active participation in village affairs.

Despite the emergence of monied interests in the neighborhood, Tracy believed the bottom line remained the same. A "majority" can and should determine what is best for everybody.

When you get down to people's rights, that's a tough question, but in a democracy you look at the majority rule and, that's just the way things work here and if the majority would wince, then it doesn't belong there. That's the justification that we would use. However, the less affluent participants in this study would question who constitutes the "majority" and whether any supposed majority should rule over the interests of others.

When describing the commission's critics, Paul sounded a like a strict teacher, meting out the punishment to recalcitrant students.

They simply don't want to get involved. It's easy to sit back and criticize because they have no risk, but they have the opportunity to join and have a voice, but they don't want to be involved. So now they have to suffer the consequences.
However, among my participants, only the six who had been involved in commission or society affairs had any idea how commissioners were selected. For the others, the commissioners were *them*, aliens intent on colonizing their piece of the planet.

Although Paul seemed insensitive at times, he acknowledged the community's misgivings, which were in turn a source of frustration for him.

I know that the commission comes across as a very intimidating group, and it's unfortunate, but we've become so accustomed to being the educators, we're tired of it, frankly. We're tired of having to tell people what they're supposed to be doing. This is the responsibility the city should have had when they created this commission fifteen years ago. They should have educated these people and provided the adequate funding and staff to make sure people understand where they're living and what their responsibilities are.

When asked about the city's responsibility for neighborhood awareness, Mike complained, "That's just passing the buck."

Not all community activists sought uniformity. Speakers at meetings of the Italian Village Society, whose membership is open to anyone, worried about dislocating less affluent residents, especially those who had lived there for years. Ardith, the owner of a renovated brick house, is not fond of the neighborhood exotic dance club, but she believed "that's part of the color, to have a mixture to attract all forms." She emphasized, "I'm not for kicking everyone out of this area just because maybe
they don't have as much as a nice little Yuppie." Jim, who is very active in the village society, also appreciated diversity. Part of his neighborhood's appeal was a yard with three cars up on concrete blocks for repairs juxtaposed to a lush Victorian garden. Near Volvos parked in front of air conditioned homes, men in sweaty work clothes could sit at the curb and cool off with a beer.

Gans (1977) speculated that cultural hegemony exists because some people must contend with higher priorities such as finding a home, food, or medical care. Ellen, an artist and one of the early community organizers, confirms this perception, asking, "How do we sustain communities if we continue to have poverty to the extent that we are [sic]? We get more and more homeless people or middle class people getting to be lower class people. How do we balance that out?" She recalled that until a few years ago, the food stamp office in Italian Village drew large crowds, creating a public nuisance. The lines wound around the block.

Folks would be there for hours, senior citizens waiting in the cold and heat, mothers with two and three children, sometimes crossing the street at great risk to their lives from speeding traffic, people opening up their cars or trucks for flea market type sales on the spot, vendors selling whatever they could, a lot of litter, the business community feeling this is awful. Sometimes there would be an agenda that we hate these people. We don't want to deal with this problem. They don't really hate the people, but they hated dealing with that problem that had to do with these people.
Food stamp lines provide a poor context for upscale art galleries, so the business community convinced county officials to implement administrative procedures that would eliminate long lines.

Vicky also wondered about the value of the arts in a community with many other needs. She relied on art to lift her spirits during hard times, so she thought art might be a solace to others as well. She suggested that:

We certainly pay enough taxes for community things. They can allow a little bit of money to go for art, as well as for housing the people on the streets, or even incorporate a program where you have people being housed. I know those people are struggling in a life and death situation, but maybe if they had another outlet where they were able to express their feelings. But you first got to be able to feed your stomach, though, and in Columbus there's a lot of street people.

Having art around the neighborhood for public viewing would not be enough. Vicky advocated programming that would enable disadvantaged people to create their own art.

Mike bought his first house in Italian Village, a dilapidated property that had electricity in only one room and half of the windows missing. He is frustrated with the Italian Village Commission, believing that it is uncommunicative and out of touch with his part of the neighborhood. There are no Italianate brick homes in Mike's area, near the historically black section of the village. Mike described the relationship of his neighborhood with the Italian Village Commission:
Only slums around here, and they're picking on us about windows that we put in, and I've been living here four years, and this house behind me, no one's lived in it the whole time, and it's boarded up, no one has ever cut the grass. Across the street, it got set on fire, one half of it was empty, the other half was when it was set on fire, then they finally tore it down. The Commission, I think they shouldn't have any opinion what goes on here because they don't participate in it. They don't do anything about the trouble here in Italian Village, they don't do anything about the accidents here.

To increase his visibility in his neighborhood, the French animateur Hurstel (1978) spends much of his time simply walking about the neighborhood, getting to know people and their interests. Mike recommends the same procedure for community leaders in Italian Village.

They didn't make you aware you were in Italian Village until after we'd done something to the house. They don't make themselves aware in the community at all. We'd never met any of them. They don't walk around, like German Village Council, they walk around and you can see them nightly, going to individuals, introducing themselves throughout the community. If they'd walk down the street and just see you cutting the grass and introduce themselves and say, hey, you know, we're from Italian Village Council, do you know you can do this, you shouldn't do that. Nothing like that happens. I've been down here four years and haven't met a single one of them.

Whereas Paul believed the city should allocated staff and a budget for community education, Mike's suggestion would cost little except volunteers' time. Paul would have brought in city experts to direct community development, but Mike thought residents should determine their own affairs in face-to-face communication. The conflict continues.
Conflicts over Public Art

Public art also falls under the purview of the Italian Village Commission, providing ample evidence of cultural hegemony. Citizens for a Better Skyline, a city-wide community improvement group, commissioned two murals for opposing sides of an Italian Village parking lot. The first shows the former train station, and the other depicts four trains on an almost life-size scale. A religious zealot wanted to reproduce the *The Last Supper* as a warning to community heathens, but the commission was not persuaded. Plaques with biblical scripture went up in its place, initiating debates about freedom of religion and expression. Several artists who live in the village occasionally place sculptures in their yards, creating some controversy. Taylor Terrace, the high-rise senior citizen apartment building, has a rather inconspicuous white metal sculpture, about six feet tall, near their driveway entrance. Besides the neighborhood controversies, there had been much press coverage about other public art in Columbus, about which some residents had strong feelings.

In the village, the most recent addition of public art (1990) is a mural of a horizontal Mona Lisa on the side of an avant-garde theatre with the motto, "Turning Art on its Ear." The Italian masterpiece is reproduced exactly,
including the lines caused by cracks in the original wooden surface, but turned ninety degrees. The theatre is located in an alley, but the painting faces a parking lot, displayed to traffic on a minor street. At the time of my interviews, the theatre and Citizens for a Better Skyline had just been denied permission for the mural by the commission. Following victory on appeal, the mural was painted and dedicated without controversy. Paul, a commissioner, explained the original decision:

Just as the police have the right to arrest somebody for speeding, we have the right to make a decision as to whether it contributes to the historic character of Italian Village, and that's the important question here, does what we are reviewing contribute to the historic nature and preserve the area known as Italian Village. I think the commission determined that while the Mona Lisa might be appropriate for that location, that mural did not contribute to the overall historic preservation of Italian Village. It was a fairly clear black and white issue. I don't think there was really a great deal of subjectiveness involved.

According to this commissioner, art that is contemporary in either content or style would not be appropriate for Italian Village. He favored trompe l'oeil, like the popular mural of Union Station, the first significant public art in the area. However, his belief that the answers to questions of appropriateness are perfectly obvious and objective contradicts the feelings of most neighborhood residents.

Jim, who lives within view of the theatre, offered this opinion about the commission's denial:
Because they were so strongly in opposition to this mural, that's even a better reason for doing this project. They apparently didn't like the scale of the Mona Lisa on the south side of a building. They didn't like the idea of imitating an existing work of art. They didn't like the strangeness of the Mona Lisa being on her side, but that's just a matter of taste, not a matter of architectural appropriateness.

Now I like all of those ideas. I like the idea of the thing being an icon of Italian art, and that it's an icon turned on its side. It attracts attention and makes people think, it makes people look at it. Why is it on its side? It's on its side because it's supposed to make people ask why it's on its side. So I think it's a wonderful idea.

Jim wanted art to make people think, to see things differently. He believed neighborhood controversies about public art illustrated the value of art.

I like to see responses to art, whether it's positive or negative or controversial because that's just validation that something is artistic. If a neighbor says that something is not artistic and is emotional about it, that's great. That to me is proof that it is indeed art. Because it's drawn his attention to something and made him look at it carefully, which he wouldn't have done otherwise.

Unfortunately for Jim, the mural inspired no public outcry when it was finally completed.

In contrast to Paul's contention that the mural is not historically appropriate, Jim offered this bit of social history, sounding like a passage from Becker (1982) or Levine (1988) about how art worlds change over time.

One of the things about this community historically is there are wall murals all over the place. People don't recognize them as such anymore because they were advertisements, they were ads for Hoffman's furniture and for many other things and, of course, you see them for tobacco and beer distributors. These things took up entire faces of buildings along High Street and they're rather intriguing now because they're fifty, sixty, seventy years old and they're
faded and you can just see the outlines of them. They're interesting because of what they say, what they remind you of historically, but when those things were painted, they were bright and colorful and attracted a lot of attention. So there is a precedent in the neighborhood for having this kind of big, colorful showy art, if you would like to call it that. I mean, a billboard is artistic. Billboard art, posters a hundred years ago in Paris, and even more recently than that, before billboards and radio and TV ads, posters were used as a medium for advertising events and now these things are considered terribly artistic and sell for $100,000. So even these old billboards that we have in the neighborhood are artistic in a way, and are a model for this kind of mural.

Consequently, James thought the proposed Mona Lisa mural, which is now visible from his back porch, would be a valuable artistic addition to the neighborhood.

In the disreputable north end of the neighborhood, home of teenage prostitutes and drug dealers, is a house decorated in a style known to folklorists as bricolage art (Bronner, 1986). The bricks and mortar are painted bright red and white to reinforce an ornamental color scheme. The porch rail is studded with whirligigs and dollhouses, and a bust of John Kennedy, in lifelike enamel colors, is mounted in front of a wagon wheel over the garage door. The commission decided to ignore the numerous code violations on that property, because as Paul explained, "They're very strange people. He's about seventy years old and arrived at the commission meeting on a motorcycle." The bricolage decorator, who is undoubtedly proud of his work, was allowed to do as he
pleased because nobody wanted to acknowledge that he even existed.

Information about local public art that seems obvious in professional or fine art worlds sometimes evades the local art world. Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein's *Brushstrokes in Flight* is located in the middle of a parking lot in front of the airport. The colorful sculpture created much local controversy when it was adopted by the Chamber of Commerce as a symbol for the city. Many people did not understand what the artwork meant, seeing no relationship between the city and that particular image. The debate began anew when the mayor offered to bestow *Brushstrokes* upon a sister city in Italy without authority to do so. His gesture was an affront to the fine arts world. Reba wondered if the sculpture was just "something for the airport. Maybe that's where the 'in flight' comes in. That's the only thing I can think of.'" Although Reba guessed the meaning of the piece correctly, she remained uncertain in knowledge and unsupportive in attitude. Her tentative interpretation, despite its simplicity, explains more than many other participants could perceive.

Because *Brushstrokes in Flight* is thoroughly artist-oriented, I consider it a prototype of fine art world aesthetics. It's subject is the medium and motion of painting itself, three brushstrokes suspended in air.
Moreover, this particular sculpture is probably best understood in the context of Lichtenstein's personal career, because it departs from the comic strip style of pop art painting that made him famous. In the local art world, art about art seems incomprehensible. Contextual knowledge about fine art is rare in the local art world because it is not part of that world. To make matters worse, the sculpture was used as the symbol for a community that could not understand it.

In a city named after Christopher Columbus, a statue of the explorer would seem to have obvious significance. However, Hank had only recently learned the meaning of the monument in front of City Hall: "It was pointed out to me recently when they refurbished the bronze that it's representative of Columbus. It's as Columbus was named for the discoverer of America, so it says something and everybody knows it." Ironically, Hank did not know it until someone told him. Three times, he protested its feet are too big, "yet it is a beautiful statue."

As with domestic property, Tracy thought choices about public art should be made by consensus: "You've got to have some sense of the majority. I don't think it's right for one person to pick a picture just because they love it and say, I don't care if the rest of the world hates it, this is what's going to go at the airport." Several people believed that public art should be approved by a
public vote, especially when dollars are involved. Reba
admits this might be impractical on a national level, but
"when it's a community like this, put it on the ballot.
Let us have the choice to make. Commission four or five
different artists to make replicas of what they're going
to do." Her suggestion was inspired by published
photographs of three maquettes for a proposed convention
center. The Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau
invited the public to voice their reactions at a series of
hearings or mail in comments.

A recurrent theme throughout the data is the perception
that many people have been excluded from decision-making,
that someone else mistakenly purports to represent their
interests. The institutions making the decisions reflect
fine art world values, leaving the local art world
participants feeling left out, angry and resentful. Many
residents discussed the art world conflicts in greater
detail.

Art Worlds in Conflict

Sean, a graduate student in psychology, described
artistic "communities of thought," similar to the
definition of art worlds used in this study:

When I hear the word art I think of an artistic
community of like-minded or similar minded individuals
who have a certain value system in common and who
think about the world and about their own life in a
certain kind of way. It's a community of thought, of
an idea, a value system that people get involved in.
Conflict occurs because there are many art worlds, multiple "communities of thought," one of which makes decisions for the others. The fine art world, which is hierarchically ordered, determines what is publicly acknowledged as art by the rest of society. The local art world, which is ordered horizontally, accepts a wide variety of aesthetic activity. Members of the local art world do not disapprove of fine art standards, they merely seek approval of their own standards, a state of cultural reciprocity.

Charles compared artistic choice to political choice. Governance is not a matter of communism versus democracy. Having lived in America for all of his 81 years, Charles favored democracy, but he added, "I don't see those communists are wrong, not for what they want. But my feet don't fit into their shoes." On the local level, many Italian Village residents admit the historic guidelines have some value, but the rules seem unrelated to their own lifestyle. Charles' aphorism expresses the cultural hegemony described by many Italian Village residents adjusting to the commission's standards: "My feet don't fit their shoes."

The local art world is both aware of and suspicious of socioeconomic class in the art worlds. Cultural influence or advantage is attributed to socioeconomic advantages.
Sharon identified money as a specific problem: "It's a shame that money defines art so many times because I don't agree with that. A lot of time the [person with] money is told by someone else that this is art." In this local art world, art is valued on a personal and emotional level. Money seems to be an impersonal, corrupting influence, spoiling art for those who truly understand what art is about.

The least affluent participants initially claimed they had no personal knowledge of art because they had no money. For example, Ruth, who survived by recycling glass to supplement a monthly pension of $350, said "to really tell you the truth, I know something about art, but I never, well, I never had the money to go." Penny suggested that art might be found in private homes, but as if apologizing, said none of her relatives could afford expensive art.

Altogether, eleven of the less affluent participants mentioned the negative influence of money. But Vicky, who had just finished a bachelor's degree at age 39, explained: "With our culture, if you have money, then you expand the arts, you have the time to explore them, and I think money is the ruling class. So I'd say money is the influencing factor." The dominant influence of money in the fine arts world is what Hamblen (1990b) refers to as "cash aesthetics of cash culture." (p. 217). Art
educators, operating in the professional art world, read about cash aesthetics in a professional journal, but denizens of the local art world have long felt its oppressive influence on culture.

Almost 100 years ago, Veblen (1953) decried "conspicuous consumption," the acquisition and display of cultural goods to remind the lower classes of their inferior status. Sean offered his own critique of conspicuous consumption. To "enhance prestige," both individual consumers and communities use art to show "that we have the resources to acquire something like this or that we have the taste and discrimination to do it."

Among the more affluent, only Parker, the psychologist, blamed money directly for affecting aesthetic decisions, "but that's only a more narrow view of it." As he explained, :

[Art brings] something into your life that's meaningful, on the broadest level, and you happen to enjoy that and get some positive visceral or intellectual experience about it, that should be enough. I'm not sure that anyone should pay $10,000,000 or whatever for a Van Gogh, but I think that's a whole different level of what art is about. When Van Gogh painted the painting it had nothing to do with being somebody's idea of a good investment. Without discussing money specifically, some of the other more affluent participants acknowledged the disproportionate influence of upper-class social institutions, such as museums and the network of dealers and galleries.
Reba, an unemployed high school graduate, trained as a beautician, discussed class issues directly. She believed many people purchase art as an investment without any personal interest in the artwork, "but of course, that's a different class of people." She elaborated,

Who determines what is art? Everybody's different class. It's everybody who chooses it, because different generations and different people go to the museums. Even a person who may not be totally educated, may have never gone farther than eighth grade, but I think they still have a choice. I think all classes of people make the distinction, make the choice. You just may not hear from certain classes as much as you would another.

A secretary at Doctor's Hospital added that art appreciation is "not just a function of those people that are intelligent."

Vicky had started take an Asian art at Ohio State, but "couldn't do the names." She enjoyed visiting museums in Cleveland and Chicago, but avoided the gallery scene in Italian Village because "it's turned into such a social event, how well can you dress and look like Miss Preppie. I go down there in shorts and I look like, God, who is she walking down this street and coming in here and having champagne with us." The extent to which Vicky participates in the arts is determined less by aesthetic preference than social circumstances. Social class tensions keep her out of the local art galleries.
Few people profess any fondness for critics, who are perceived by most of the participants as having too much influence and too little genuine expertise. Don, who has collected hundreds of original cast albums from Broadway shows, said, "Sometimes I wonder when I see some of the things they call art. Some people believe because somebody's a critic, they can't make any mistakes, but I think that's obvious at times, it's just opinion, more than anything." On the subject of critics, Hank said, "Maybe I resent a group of people who impose their thoughts on other people and call something art."

Not everybody hates critics. Charles, who has worked with horses for most of his 81 years, suggests that "an art critic, basically, is just like a man judging horses," and horse shows need judges. However, even when judging horses, "the people that have the final say, would be the people that are participating." A few people discussed the educational value of having other opinions available for consideration. Helen expressed the feelings of many when she said "sometimes you'd like to put them all in a basket and throw it in the middle of the river, but then at other times it does bring your attention to things. . . . But regardless of what that critic says one way or the other, we are still the last voice, the public." Others agree that critics can be helpful, "if you don't take them seriously, and I don't. I would never let
anyone decide for me what's in." Critics may have some usefulness, but individual choice rules supreme.

Although almost everyone mentioned critics in some way, fewer seemed aware of the gatekeeping function of museums. Ellen, the professional artist and community activist, believed that "most of the public feelings would place the importance that it's OK for a museum or an institution that is involved with art to make those decisions. They tend to validate, whatever they do is probably OK." On the other hand, Mike said art is found in "museums," but,

That's taking away from the individual's viewpoint, but that's what a museum's for. You go there and there's art there, what someone else, of course, characterizes as art, but you have to determine for yourself what you find is art.

Ardith thinks "a lot of abstract art looks like shit, but it's at the museum so supposedly it's art." Parker observed that "we're taught to go and look at something in a museum and that's art." Sharon, the evening art student, wondered "is there a god that sits at the top and says this is art and this isn't? I don't think so."

Many residents were aware of the role of socialization in shaping aesthetic preference and its unequal distribution in society. The persons with the least amount of education were convinced that understanding the arts required advanced education. Lacking education, they did not perceive art to be part of their life-world.
Invariably, such persons referred me to other people and places for my research because they were sure they had nothing to contribute.

Frank, the architect, described his own socialization in the arts:

It's just every experience in my background. There's great appreciation for art in my family and therefore I've been open to responses to art. I was encouraged from an early age when it was noticed that I had a talent for drawing. Everything creative was sort of encouraged.

Don, a former theatre box office worker, also attributes art appreciation to "the way you're brought up." Frank, Sharon, and a few other participants were socialized in the arts as young people, but most Italian Village residents were not.

Few of the adults over thirty had any education in the arts that they could recall, confirming Orend's (1987) findings about socialization in the arts. Ruth remembered, "they'd have us paint pictures, make Santa Clauses, try to make a monkey and stuff. Now I just felt that was something for us to do. I wasn't studying art. Maybe I was." When asked if she learned anything from those activities, she replied, "Yeah, I learned a lot. I learned how to make houses and dogs and cats." With such superficial arts education as children, it is little wonder most people report limited participation in the arts as adults. Only persons from upper social classes or
with advanced education had any significant arts education.

**The Internalized Conflict: Aesthetic Bifurcation**

Stuhr and Leptak (1990) observed a dual aesthetic value system in a group of neighbors who first postulate a narrow, conventional description of art, followed by a broader, more personal response. People offer what they perceive to be the correct answer, the one that is socially recognized and approved. Then, having securely identified their place in society, people feel freer to say what they really think, often tempered by numerous qualifiers, such as "in my opinion", "but that's just my idea", "as far as I'm concerned," and so on. For example, one of Stuhr and Leptak's (1990) participants said, "The Campbell soup can, to me, is ridiculous. But I'm not going to argue with these people." (p. 101). This woman yielded artistic determination to art professionals, even though she disputed and resented their judgment. In the Italian Village group, Ardith demonstrated divided values about the same artwork: "Andy Warhol's Campbell soup can was art [institutional definition], and I'm still not convinced of it [personal value], but pop art is--I don't know whether it will ever last or not."
This division of values in thinking about art was common in Italian Village. For example, one elderly woman first said art is "pictures," but only a minute later added, "art can be lots of things, taking care of cats and dogs, raising kids, but art, what you're talking about is an art gallery. It's for architects, painted things." A single mother on welfare first said that art is found in "galleries," and then said "everywhere," even the alley behind her apartment building.

Almost all aesthetic questions provoked a dual response. One answer is the one people are socialized to believe, reflecting institutional values, and the other answer reflects the respondent's personal values, which are often different. The supposedly correct answer is usually offered first, followed by a critique of its deficiencies or an alternative explanation. The participants in this study appear to have internalized the cultural hegemony experienced in their local art world. The shifting of attention from one art world to another within an individual is aesthetic bifurcation. All 20 participants in this study exhibited some degree of aesthetic bifurcation.

As described earlier, many Italian Village residents first identified art as paintings before revealing a much broader range of aesthetic values. This split response exemplifies aesthetic bifurcation. Parker initially said
that art is "most paintings, generally creative kinds of materials, probably associated more with museums." Within a minute, he added, "Part of what I do as a psychologist is art in some general sense." Paintings is the fine art or professional art world conception of art; Collingwood (1938), for example, discusses only paintings. All other responses, especially those beyond the traditional fine and performing arts, are part of the local art world. One participant identified the dichotomy as "museum art versus the everyday art." The oppositional thinking can also be described as institutional versus individual aesthetics, or the fine art world versus the local art world. The local art world does not exclude visual arts, but it also includes much more, as demonstrated in the previous chapter.

Hank stated that art is found in museums, galleries, art festivals, and near public buildings, all the usual institutional sponsors of art. However, he also talked about an adolescent visit to a burlesque show as the most memorable artistic experience of his youth. Paul, who had outlined two distinct art worlds, institutional and individual, said that "museum art is found in places like museums and sculpture parks, and then there would be everyday art. I guess what I'm saying is you can find art everywhere."
Paul noted that "so many people tend to focus in on fine art, the famous paintings and statues and sculptures and things like that." After much discussion about the aesthetic value of the housing stock and public art in Italian Village, he commented, "There seems to be a bit of a difference between everyday art, the things I am describing, and the museum kind of art that you don't see on a regular basis, and I'm not exactly sure where those differences should occur and why they occur." Puzzling over his newly discovered dichotomy, he suggested, "maybe that would be a way to differentiate that, so there would be two forms of art, the everyday things, and the art that is created specifically for one intent. That would be a good way to define it." What Paul discovered, in his own terms, was aesthetic bifurcation, the internalized conflict between two art worlds.

Parker analyzed his own aesthetic bifurcation in the following discussion of "individual determination" and "the cultural end of things."

So I think it's going to be pretty much an individual determination about what's art and then on the cultural end of things there are any number of designated experts that tell us what art is, and then there are critics who look at art and tell us what's good and what's bad about it. That certainly has a place in the world, but I think in a more general sense, art is perceptual, it has to do with an individual's particular viewpoint about what art is.
Parker felt obligated to acknowledge art experts and critics, but settled upon individual aesthetic reception as having primary value.

The residents of Italian Village talked freely about cultural hegemony in their neighborhood. They experienced conflict in the attempt to revitalize their neighborhood by regulating architecture, landscaping, and public art. They suspected that their interests were being overtaken by newcomers or outsiders with greater economic influence. When given an opportunity to talk about art, they grudgingly acknowledged the dominant art world, but through aesthetic bifurcation, asserted the validity of their own local art world. It is a rich and complex art world, one that deserves greater attention.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Eduard Lindeman asserted that adult educators should wrest control of culture from the elite minority, returning culture to the masses. Many art educators have recently argued that alternative aesthetic systems need more research and development for integration into the curriculum. In this study, I investigated the aesthetic values of residents in a local community, the Italian Village in Columbus, Ohio.

I addressed two related research questions. The first question was: What are the aesthetic values of the residents of Italian Village? The second question was: How is cultural hegemony manifested in the daily lives of Italian Village residents? The objective was to develop an improved understanding of local aesthetic values as a basis for education in cultural development.

I drew the key concepts for the study from the literature of critical theory, art theories, sociology, participation studies, and cultural development. Critical theorists are interested in developing insight into the
actual conditions of social life, focusing on struggles over power. Critical theorists typically attribute hegemony, an imbalance in power, to differences in class, race, or gender.

The dominant values in contemporary aesthetics are originality, individuality, permanence, and the organization of form. Other key aesthetic concepts include skill, representation, utility, amusement, expression, imagination, and many others.

According to social theory, society is characterized by either consensus or conflict. Recent research in the sociology of the arts usually applies a conflict theory of society. Sociology of the arts focuses on the social production of art, the role of social groups in creating, distributing, and consuming the arts. From the literature, I developed a model of nine art worlds, each comprising distinct social groups with their own aesthetic values. I defined these art worlds as subsets of the life-world, the assumptions and beliefs enacted by people in the conduct of their daily lives. Cultural hegemony is the result of conflicts between participants in the various art worlds.

Participation studies in adult education and audience surveys in the arts have both found that participation is related to socioeconomic status, with education as the most reliable predictor of participation. Studies of arts participation have focused primarily upon the traditional
fine arts: painting, ballet, opera, classical music, theatre, and so on.

Adult education in the arts may attempt to distribute the dominant culture more widely, or it may develop participation in a greater variety of artistic activities. In this study, I was interested in cultural development, allowing all people to define their own culture in their own terms.

My research methodology was critical ethnography, based on a conceptual framework of epistemological and social theories. Through the critical ethnographic method, I sought to understand the participants' construction of aesthetic knowledge in terms of the critical concept of cultural hegemony. The research site was Italian Village, an aging inner-city neighborhood in Columbus, Ohio. I identified a research population through random selection, receiving participation from 28 adults in semi-structured interviews about their aesthetic values and participation in the arts. I collected additional data by observing community meetings, inspecting the neighborhood on foot, and collecting various documents about the area. The interviews were transcribed for analysis based on recurrent themes in the data and the related literature.

When discussing art, the residents of Italian Village tended to focus on visual arts, although they also recognized a great many other activities as art, ranging
from gardening to surgery. The dominant aesthetic values were craftsmanship or skill and originality or uniqueness. Expression, beauty, and creativity were also mentioned frequently. Art primarily meant visual art, especially painting, but many residents extended the idea of skills as art to a wide variety of activities. Some people believed that art may be perceived in anything. Life itself may be an artistic act. The residents who actively created art tended to think of art as a process, rather than a product. Relatively few persons distinguished clearly between good art and bad because they thought of all art as good by definition. The recurrent theme in their thinking about art, the one point upon which almost all would agree, was the significance of aesthetic reception. Consumers, not artists or other arts professionals, decide what is art. Moreover, they vigorously defended individualism in aesthetic reception, asserting the right of individuals to form their own judgment. Participants in this local art world valued individualism in aesthetic reception as much as the professional art world prizes individualism in artistic creation.

Italian Village residents experienced cultural hegemony in their efforts to improve the aesthetic appearance of the area through its architecture, landscaping, and public art. Many residents believed the Italian Village Commission was unreasonable in the standards it used to
approve changes in individual properties. They expressed much resentment and frustration towards the commission, while the commission itself felt thwarted in its mission to develop the area as a historic neighborhood. Most residents were aware of public art in Italian Village and Columbus. They valued public art generally, but disapproved of the standards used to select such work. Many residents expressed awareness of conflicting art worlds, attributing their differences to socioeconomic imbalances. In addition to the external conflict over local issues, participants' talk about art reveals internalized cultural conflict, which I described as aesthetic bifurcation.

**Implications**

1. If community leaders hope to revitalize Italian Village, they need to initiate educational outreach programs. The monthly Italian Village Society newsletter alone is not effective in developing community awareness. Relatively few residents know about the history of the area, few know and understand the architectural guidelines, and few know the process for getting changes approved. Sustained contact and face-to-face communication will be necessary. The areas of the village not yet extensively renovated need special attention, since many of their
residents are not fully aware that they live in the village.

2. Art is important in the lives of Italian Village residents, but it is not necessarily the fine arts addressed by audience surveys or taught in art classes. Any community arts organization sensitive to its constituency should offer programming that develops the arts which people appreciate. Agencies receiving public funding, or even just tax-exempt status, have a special obligation to provide access to all citizens, regardless of previous education or socialization in the arts. In many situations, that would entail cultural development.

3. Many artists and art teachers supplement their income by teaching adult classes at senior centers, community art centers, museums, and other institutions. Art education faculty in universities find that their student-teachers are ill-prepared for teaching adult students. The student-teachers draw their curriculum from a professional art or school art perspective, whereas the motives and expectations of adult students originate in their local art world. Both parties feel frustrated (Mullen, 1989). Outside the classroom, students may continue to produce art within the standards of their local art world (Durr, Fortin, & Leptak, in press). Art education faculty need to acquaint students with local art world characteristics and the need to respect the values
and meanings of other art worlds. It may be useful for students to read studies such as this. It would be even better for students to participate in similar, smaller studies of their own, as I did originally (Stuhr & Leptak, 1990).

4. As art educators move away from indoctrinating students in the cash-culture aesthetics of Dead White European Males (Hamblen, 1990b), there is much conjecture in the literature about alternative models for aesthetic judgment. The model of art worlds as paradigms of excellence developed in Chapter II offers one such framework for further inquiry into alternative aesthetics.

5. Adult education has neglected learning in the arts for many years, but there remains some interest in adult education for community development. This study of neighborhood issues in Italian Village shows that aesthetics cannot be divorced from supposedly more practical concerns such as economic development and social welfare, or even streets and potholes. Art does contribute to the quality of life, and any attempt to enhance the quality of a community must attend to aesthetic factors.

Recommendations for Neighborhood Development

The strategies used by neighborhood organizations for the last twenty years to create public awareness and involvement have had only limited effectiveness in Italian
Village. I suggest a more personal approach than newsletters. Commissioners and officers of the village society should implement a program of walking neighborhood streets on a regular schedule to introduce themselves to residents and solicit their input.

To reduce the burden upon the commissioners, the village society might organize neighborhood groups similar to the crime watch teams found in many cities. These groups, however, would address local concerns about architectural integrity, safety, city services, business development, or anything else they believed important. Meetings might be held informally in the less intimidating environment of residents' homes. Group leaders or block captains could host gatherings to disseminate information about domestic architecture, the history of Italian Village, and the guidelines for renovation. The village commission or society might create a slide show to facilitate education about the area. Potential leaders might be found among applicants for renovation, who have an immediate and personal interest in area affairs.

These neighborhood meetings should not merely disseminate information in a hierarchical manner. The issues and ideas raised in these smaller groups should be reported back to the village society or one of its committees for action, reaction, and comment. One topic needing attention is the area guidelines. Many of my
participants did not think that the description of Italian Village found in the *Guidelines for Renovation* (1989) accurately described their own section of the neighborhood. It may be time to reconsider the guidelines and devise regulations that better accommodate the diverse characteristics of the neighborhood and its smaller divisions.

**Recommendations for Additional Research**

1. Other research methods should provide additional insights into the characteristics of local art worlds. Focus group studies, such as Proctor's study of metaphors used by adult learners (1991) or the Getty Center's study of museum visitors (1991) offer useful models. For almost everyone, aesthetics is a difficult subject to discuss, but the interaction among focus group participants should stimulate additional ideas and more reflective thinking. During this study, I twice found myself interviewing couples rather than individuals. The resulting dialogue and debate was revealing.

2. Some sociologists of the arts treat youth culture as a distinct art world (Gans, 1974; Zolberg, 1990). However, the aesthetic values of other generations should be studied as well. In this study, the adults over age 60 expressed greater interest in art as a product of life review, as an aid to memory, and as self-expression. They
had little interest in what they considered modern art, but maintained an active interest in community issues. Much has been written about the relationships between art, ethnicity, and gender, but the correlation between age and aesthetic preference may be equally significant.

3. Additional research on aesthetic reception should be conducted in minority communities. In this study, the five black participants did not differ significantly in their responses from white participants. However, four were over age 60, and the only young black person was a well educated professional in an arts-related occupation. Ethnic groups may enact distinct aesthetic preferences that were not accessible in this study.

4. Because I was interested in aesthetic concepts, rather than responses to individual artworks, I did not show any art to participants for their reaction. Such a strategy would focus attention on the researchers' choice of artworks, and might intimidate persons unfamiliar with the selected works. For this study, I wanted the participants to be able think about art in their own terms. Moreover, I did not want to imply that art is only visual, but providing examples of performing or literary arts would be difficult. However, responding to art reproductions would stimulate thinking about art for some participants, especially those who wanted a more specific context than I was willing to provide. As a follow-up
strategy, a researcher could use specific artworks to further refine or test emerging interpretations.
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