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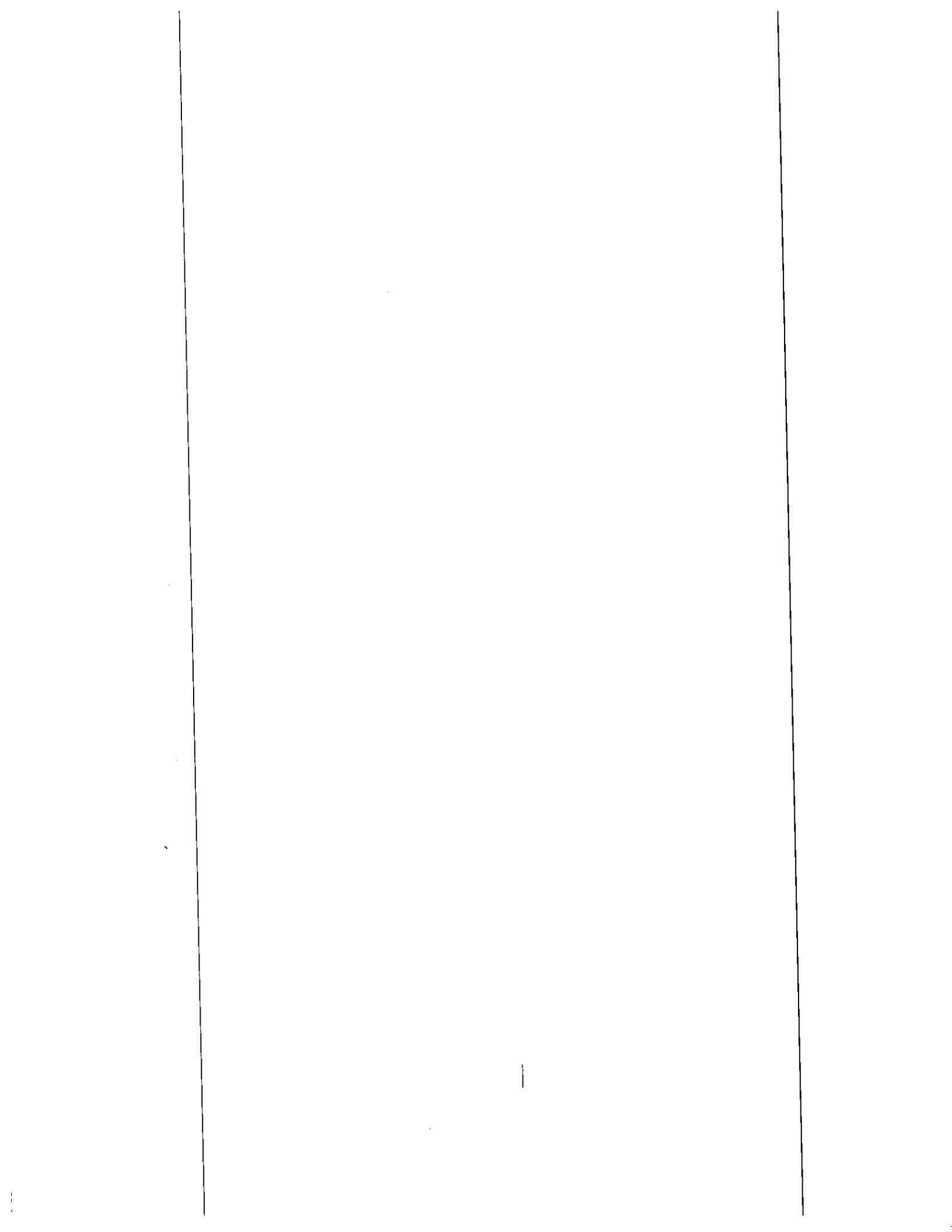
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Ritualized Rebellions in Primitive
and Advanced Cultures: The Case of
Desegregation in the United States

by

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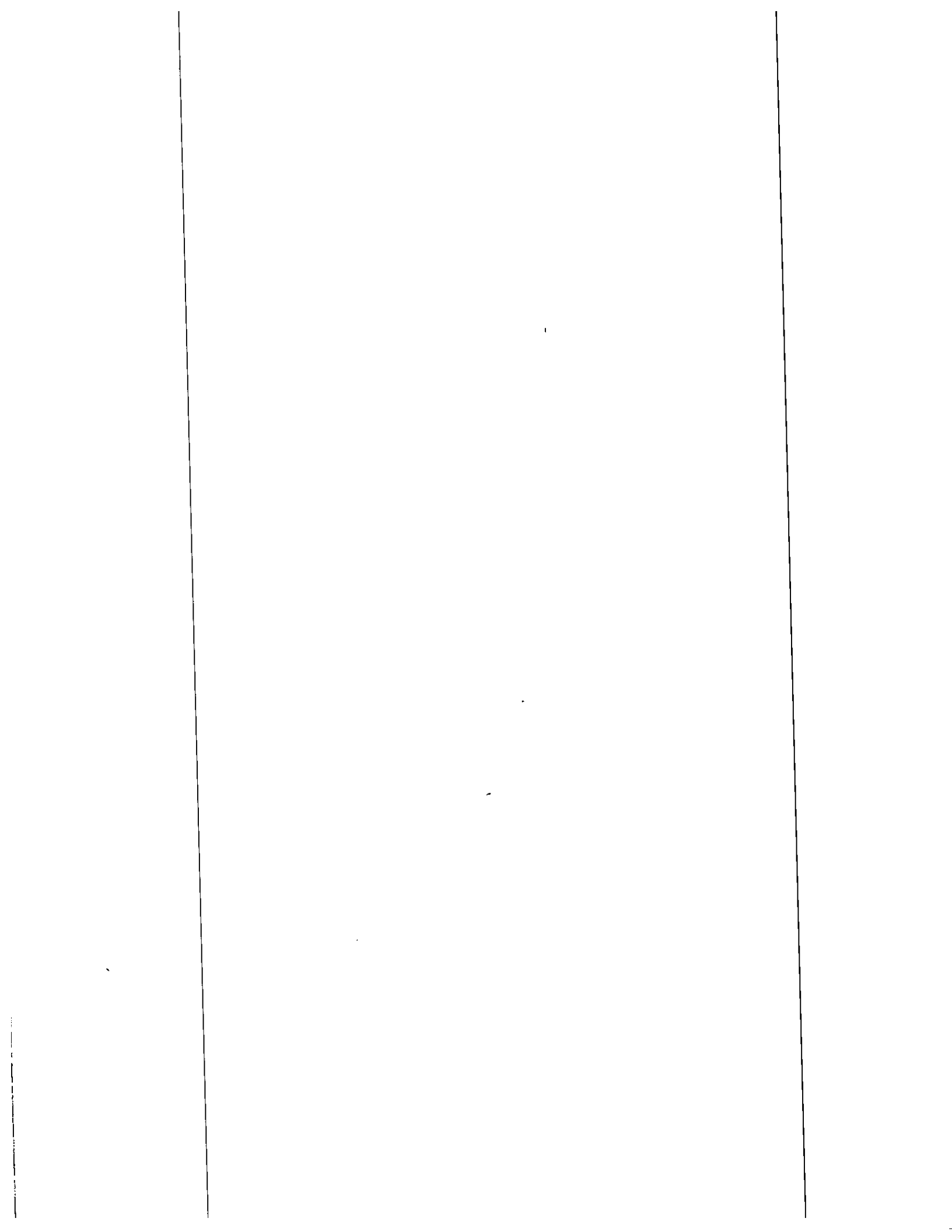
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The conditions under which nonroutine collective actions or community disputes actually reinforce the social order are not well known. Primitive cultures achieve this effect through something anthropologists call a "ritualized rebellion." In this paper, school desegregation is likened to a ritualistic conflict and reform. It creates the illusion that great and painful changes are occurring in a community while leaving basic class and political divisions alone, or reinforcing them.

ABSTRACT

Sociologists have long been concerned with something they refer to as "the problem of order." While there may be no simple definition of what that phrase means, much thought has been given to how group life is sustained during periods of crisis or great change. Students of urbanization have been particularly interested in this topic, faced as they were with communities that were growing so rapidly that customary ways of doing things seemed to have little relevance. Both scholars and concerned citizens worried about how to reconstitute a workable social and moral order in cities, and they experimented with a variety of techniques to achieve that end. This paper contains an analysis of their legacy with special attention paid to school desegregation as the most important example of recent reform efforts.

The general question to be addressed is straightforward. To wit, how can nonroutine collective actions or community controversies contribute to the creation of a more workable moral and social order in urban areas? Of more particular interest is the contribution of school desegregation to the history of reform efforts intended to greatly reduce, if not resolve, the urban crisis apparent in our own industrial society.

School desegregation, it is argued, is analogous to ritualized rebellions in more primitive cultures. Displays of collective concern or outrage in those cultures provide an acceptable means of acknowledging the existence of inequality without doing much about it. This pattern is modified to an extent in more advanced cultures where big changes, such as those associated with urbanization, do occur and persons do find it necessary to amend their social order. In this context, the ritualized rebellion offers us an opportunity to change some relatively trivial aspects of our social order and avoid disrupting more basic relations among our several social classes and political institutions. As a form of nonroutine collective action, ritualized

rebellions help us avoid two unpromising solutions to the problem of maintaining order during periods of change: 1) the ascension of underprivileged groups as serious political and economic threats through civil unrest (Tilly; Tilly et al.); and 2) the retreat of groups to their own parochial neighborhoods and use of more reactionary forms of collective action (Gans; Suttles; Kornblum; Katznelson; Susser). The ritualistic conflicts and reforms surrounding the issue of desegregation played an important part in introducing people to a new way of urban life. They did not influence the course of urbanization and economic development greatly; nor did they resolve the differences among blacks or between blacks and whites as some persons have argued.

Yinger (843-846) has presented his own careful analysis of ritualized rebellions as "rituals of opposition." He, too, notes their paradoxical character, acknowledging their challenge to the social order even as they reinforce its legitimacy for most persons. Yinger has sought to show, as I do here, that there are strong parallels between such acts in primitive and advanced cultures. However, he focuses on their contribution to "counter-cultures," that is groups or movements which reject established norms and values. Both the countercultural group and its "rituals of opposition" can contribute to social change by offering alternate visions of living and believing to society's members. The argument presented here about desegregation is the logical complement to Yinger's. As part of a ritualized rebellion, desegregation conflicts and reforms serve the social order as "rituals of reaffirmation" through which we hope to better realize the "true" meaning of the norms and values we all ostensibly share. Some writers have argued that educational reforms were designed to preserve the American class structure; they essentially were a "capitalist trick" to create a docile work force and electorate (Katz; Bowles and Gintis; Rehberg and Rosenthal). I think, however, that desegregation crises and reforms enabled us to avoid more punishing displays of class conflict while growing accustomed to new ways of urban life. There may be advantages to the act of hiding class conflicts (Ogbu; Korabel; Collins), and they may not be confined to a "ruling" class. The whole community may benefit.

The Study of Desegregation

The role which school desegregation plays in creating a new civil order or reinforcing an old one is the subject of this paper. Persons accustomed to thinking about this reform and its attendant conflicts are not likely to accept the idea that there is a debatable proposition contained in the problem I have posed. However else they may bicker and snipe at each other's work (Kalmus et al.), both the supporters and opponents of desegregation view this reform as a tool to impel social change or at least to promote the idea that change is necessary. As such, their work fits squarely and comfortably into a tradition of scholarly thinking about racial and ethnic conflict and accommodation. Central to this line of thought is the notion that the differences between racial or ethnic populations eventually will be resolved. The timing and precise nature of their accommodation may differ from one society to another; but the conflicts between them will be resolved or at least greatly reduced (Berry and Tischler: 149-156). These populations may continue to compete with each other; but the harshness of subsequent disputes is lessened by the fact that both parties have "institutionalized" their conflicts. They have developed new rules for processing claims, defining their common interests, and even preventing outbreaks of civil unrest (Himes: 200-202, 212-234).

The scientific importance of desegregation--as compared to its moral correctness or political advisability--is that it so nicely captures this process of institutionalizing conflict. It freezes, if you will, that moment in the supposed cycle of race relations when two people earnestly begin to teach themselves the difficult habits of self-constraint and mutual accommodation (Steinberg: 214). Social scientists were quick to seize

the opportunity to evaluate how well the tough medicine of desegregation was taking on the American public. There are literally thousands of studies in which the good, bad, or indifferent effects of desegregation on people have been discussed (Epps; McConahay; Weinberg; Armor). Though not always brimming with optimism, a number of these studies do provide readers with some hope that desegregation "can work" or be improved. They often contain hints on how to achieve that end (Crain and Mahard; Patcher; Kirby et al.). Attention most often focuses on the decisiveness and scope of desegregation orders. More ambitious plans, it is reasoned, may yield better results for minority children in the long run (Hochschild). Tensions and overt conflict may be greater for a time; but the purgative properties of conflict help to reconcile whites to the inevitability of change and accustom blacks to their improved status (Russell a: 136-140; Crain and Mahard). Desegregation conflicts are "self-dampening" for this reason. They are not "self-perpetuating, with each conflict polarizing the community and creating the social basis for the next conflict" (Crain and Mahard: 697). Here, declare Crain and Mahard (707), is a community conflict that is "unambiguously resolved."

To the extent this is true, it would make desegregation-related controversies unique among the events typically thought of as examples of intergroup conflict. This, of course, is precisely what students of desegregation long have maintained. At least one recognized expert in the field, for instance, has argued that "there are virtually no theories of social change that are applicable to this type of 'forced' community social change" (Russell a: 135). One might take exception to such a bold declaration. The fact remains, however, that explicit references to bodies

of sociological theory are quite rare in studies of school desegregation (Chesler et al. ; Crain and Mahard). A "conflict approach" often is employed, if only implicitly; but most explanations of why desegregation does or does not work in particular communities are based on psychological reasoning. Why people adjust better in some instances than others depends on their willingness and ability to change their beliefs and attitudes-- resolve their dissonance--about themselves or members of another race. The institutionalization of interracial conflict through school desegregation supposedly makes this possible.

Desegregation proceeded to be called for by jurists and scientists with only a vague notion about educational equity to guide their work (Russell b: 95). Given this fuzzy mandate, debates over the reform tended to be confined to topics which dealt with changing the people who attended or worked with the schools. These topics included the legal barriers to educational equality, student achievement and emotional well-being, busing and white flight, race relations in schools, and post-graduation opportunities at college or in the work force. The results of this work have satisfied no one. Desegregation still is seen as either a painful and useless intrusion or a necessary experiment in democracy and racial temperance. Research can be cited to defend both positions. In truth, desegregation never has obtained for minority youngsters the dramatic gains that were hoped for. On the other hand, it is not the unmitigated failure most opponents have dismissed it as being (Hawley). Such ambiguous results belie the interpretation of desegregation as an "unambiguously resolved" conflict.

If our traditional notions about the beneficial effects of institutionalizing racial conflicts were correct, then we should have expected far more definitive and positive results from scientific studies. This reasoning clearly underlies arguments for the abandonment of desegregation as a tool for achieving more equal educational benefits for minority students. The dilemma posed for supporters of the reform is heightened by more detailed studies of how desegregation and related reforms prevailed in a single district or small number of schools (Rogers; Sussmann; Kalodner and Fishman; Berman and McLaughlin; Willie and Greenblatt). When viewed in this way, school districts appear far less like self-conscious purveyors of rationality and justice or passive vehicles for mandated changes (Crain and Mahard: 705; Scott: 127-132). District caretakers seem more intent on ensuring the continuing independence of their system. The district may have to adapt to changes in its environment; some negotiating can occur over the treatment of its personnel and clients. Not everything is negotiable, however (Strauss). The legitimacy and authority of the public schools to make and carry out educational policy cannot be threatened. Contrary to much speculation, the courts and federal agencies only rarely and reluctantly intervene directly into the daily operation of school bureaucracies (Kirp; Glazer; Monti, c). Moreover, even among the most rabid advocates of desegregation, one finds little support for the idea that this situation should be changed (Orfield: 422-426). Thus, the administrative routines and political customs through which discriminatory school practices were framed and implemented seem equally immune to criticism and change. The underlying tensions and inequities built into the way this institution operates have not been removed, even if some persons say they feel better

about their situation (Crain and Mahard). The possibility exists that aggrieved parties will again find reasons to doubt the institution's ability or its caretakers' willingness to adapt to a changing world. Desegregation conflicts have not been "unambiguously settled," and doubts must be raised about how far the inevitable process of racial accommodation has progressed.

The existing literature on school desegregation creates a substantial problem for the student of race relations. It reveals a reform which by itself has not achieved the dramatic changes expected of it. It has neither liberated an entire race of people nor dissolved our social order as was feared (Wilkinson: 5, 43). On the other hand, it has by itself prompted more bitter and protracted conflicts inside communities than any other issue since 1954. It will be necessary to reconcile these facts, if we are to understand what desegregation is and what it has accomplished.

The sociological treatment of desegregation most often finds it subsumed under more general discussions of the civil rights movement (Oberschall; Garner). While a reasonable thing to do, it ties desegregation to a larger body of literature concerned with social movements. Observers of social movements tend to share the notion that such collective actions are designed to effect substantial changes in society (Smelser: 270-312; Lipset and Raab; Turner and Killian: 245-268). This idea obscures the possibility that even "progressive" movements like those associated with desegregation and civil rights merely may serve to reinforce the established social order and/or legitimate whatever remains of it in the wake of large-scale changes in its politics and economy.

Hints that this alternate view of educational reform and racial controversies may have some validity were available in the case studies about desegregation noted earlier. To their credit, Crain and Mahard tried to examine the impact of desegregation on the politics of communities where it was introduced. Yet they ignored a substantial set of findings from studies that reveal communities to be far more adept at resisting change than in embracing it (Kornblum; Susser). This idea is elaborated upon in some detailed studies of racial conflict and reforms in public schools. The "institutionalization of conflict" may divert the attention of activists, coopt them, and/or exhaust them even as the institution manages to maintain control over its daily affairs and treat its "new" clients in the same "old" fashion (Berman and McLaughlin; Monti, a). Reform, in such cases, may provide an opportunity for the institution's caretakers to continue their customary behavior while enjoying the protection of the courts and the status accorded to all harried innovators. Reform may not be as definitive a sign of progress or accommodation as race relations and desegregation experts always have reasoned. Instead, the "controlled introduction of disorder" may be "aimed as much at...enhancing the cohesion of the group" or whole community as it is at "providing therapy for conflict and regeneration of the social system" (Thieblemont: 586).

The contrived nature of social order is no more obvious than when a society is confronted with large-scale changes, like industrialization and urbanization, over which no person or group can hope to exert complete or predictable control. Under such circumstances, stylized forms of disorder may help to legitimate and dramatize the passing of a way of life already rendered obsolete by more basic changes in the social and

economic order. The emergence of desegregation as an issue, for example, did not occur until well after blacks had begun to establish themselves as an urban population and more potent economic force (Steinberg: 201-214). Collective actions or controversies like those associated with desegregation would be viewed neither as temporary by-products of large-scale changes in society nor as effective devices for working out contradictions within the political and economic order (Feagin and Hahn: 53; Tilly et al.: 241; Monti, b: 42-43). Their contribution, instead, might be at once more modest and persistent. Displays of emendatory zeal or collective outrage in themselves may not substantially hasten the introduction of new ways of behaving and believing in the communities they touch. Were such efforts more routinely successful, social change would be a more constant and disruptive feature of community life than it is.

The significance of intermittent attempts to make over the world or at least one's small corner of it may lie more in their implicit acceptance by the public as a customary way of ratifying big changes in its life or acknowledging its inability to halt them. Otherwise, it becomes difficult to account for the persistence of relatively primitive forms of corporate action in our distinctly unprimitive, bureaucratic world except as atavistic expressions of pent-up rage (Banfield). The historic vitality of the "mob" as a form of collective behavior has been chronicled in Western Europe and to a much smaller extent in the United States (Tilly; Monti, d). The character of this behavior may have changed with the times. Yet it remains at least as tried and "normal" a ritual in our political culture as the more modern recall or referendum which also register displeasure with public officials or policies without toppling public institutions.

Ordinarily, in this context, the term "ritual" is used to describe practices which enable members of "primitive" societies to find some indirect and stylized way to "resolve" disputes without having to address the underlying problems which inspired the conflicts (Paige and Paige; Gluckman). It is not thought to be applicable to the ways in which more "advanced" peoples solve their problems (Gluckman: 133-134). Nevertheless, if we forgo the luxury of this kind of cultural absolutism, we may find that the term "ritual" in our society can apply to community conflicts and not just the quaint customs of someone else's religion. It certainly would make it easier to understand how both the supporters and opponents of desegregation could reasonably claim that the issue had been settled in their favor. Advocates could point with pride to the introduction of a much-despised reform. Adversaries could show how effectively they resisted and continued to resist the plan, that racial problems still existed in the schools, and that many persons had abandoned the public schools (Ross and Berg: 672-674). Both would be correct.

Set forth in the remaining sections of this paper is a different way of looking at desegregation. Desegregation controversies, it is reasoned, create the illusion that the public subjected itself to a severe test and passed it. In the process, the public would have recommitted itself to certain shared beliefs about justice or fair play without undermining a social order that purchases a degree of order and equity for all its members. The argument represents something of a compromise between those who see desegregation as a force for social change or a cruel excuse for progress. Desegregation will be seen as only one of a series of reform efforts

stretching back to the early 1800s that was intended to help persons regain some control over the changes affecting their communities. Though never entirely or even largely successful, these attempts to institutionalize the conflicts swirling about them enabled persons to recapture a measure of the order they once had relied upon and make sense of its passing. A brief reference to recent efforts to create a "voluntary desegregation plan" for St. Louis city and county illustrate how important barriers to equality are left intact even after a long and bitter controversy.

Ritualized Rebellions And Public Education

Evidenced in school desegregation is a tradition of ritualistic conflicts and reforms in urban areas that was intended to address the "heterogeneity and seeming lack of moral cohesiveness" of cities (Boyer: 287). Established institutions seemed incapable of addressing this problem. Common also to these displays of public concern was an explicit connection between reforming people and maintaining important civic rituals. Changes have taken place in the last century. While poor people were most often the targets of these reform efforts, over time there has been less tendency to hold them solely responsible for causing or resolving the problems they faced. Consistent with this gradual change was the proposal to desegregate black schools with white youngsters. Although bitterly contested, "it nevertheless received more serious attention than the idea that one might desegregate the nineteenth century schools of working and lower-class children with their upper-class peers" (Monti, e: 7). Changed, too, has been the role of private groups in responding to the urban crisis. Once the instigators of great reform efforts, philanthropic agencies, churches, and the like have taken a position of secondary importance to government agencies.

The intrusion of governments into ritualistic conflicts and reforms has drawn a clearer connection between the resolution of community problems and the vitality of our civil order. Private reformers often fretted about this relation and pursued their best solutions to the problem of maintaining viable civic traditions in an aggressive and self-conscious way. Many of their private initiatives--the common schools, social service agencies, parks--later became the basis for the public solutions to urban problems (Boyer; Glaab and Brown; Ravitch; Piven and Cloward).

More important for our purposes, however, has been the effect of governmental intervention on expanding the scope of remedial efforts beyond a particular locale or class of persons. It has been noted elsewhere (Monti, e: 7), that government intervention "prompts a search for bigger and more representative political jurisdictions, and ultimately moral communities, to involve in the reform movement." Early efforts to reform the poor in their own neighborhoods gradually were transformed into public works projects to revitalize the whole city. This quest for the "true urban community" has come more recently to encompass whole metropolitan areas. School desegregation, thus, has provided a convenient and logical basis for arguing about what the modern urban community ought to look like in many parts of the country.

Public education became a crucial element in the ritualistic conflicts and reforms of early nineteenth century cities. While reformers never completely abandoned their efforts to reach the adult urban population--witness our modern housing and welfare programs--a conscious decision was made fairly early in the history of urban reform movements to focus attention

on young people. A sense of civility and loyalty might better be bred into children, since their parents probably were beyond reclamation. Yet neither Sunday schools nor the more secular and compulsory charity schools provided a sufficient institutional base for rehabilitating cities by redeeming their school-aged children. The subsequent introduction of mandatory attendance at public or common schools was an important step. Though the governance, curricula, and ethnic mix of such schools were fought over, upper-class reformers and their supporters created an institution which was expected to train young people how to be more effective citizens and workers (Nasaw; Wrigley; Tyack; Boyer).

The urban crisis spread, nevertheless, as both the number and variety of urban residents grew. Problems once defined as private and moral concerns became matters of public responsibility. Private initiatives in areas like health, sanitation, housing, and social welfare were adopted by local governments. The persistence of urban problems eventually was linked to government complicity. Attempts to purify government, like those associated with the Progressive Era, were necessary because public rituals had become infected by the same germs of indifference and incivility which already touched most areas of urban life.

That these reform movements failed to "cure" cities in any definitive way, just as desegregation has failed to achieve its ostensible goals, requires us to look beyond their stated objectives for an understanding of the service they rendered. If nothing else, the early movements show how more well-to-do elements of city populations and their supporters tried to cope with the challenges of urbanization even as they moved into protected neighborhoods and later abandoned the cities. Evidenced also after

1890 was their ceding of control over popular forms of mass agitation to the working and lower classes. Their techniques for controlling the masses and maintaining some semblance of economic order became more subtle as the civic ideal and moral community they worked to achieve became more abstract and geographically dispersed. There was an exception, however, and it was the public school. Of all the attempts to institutionalize the battle against civil intemperance, the public schools have been viewed as the best hope for reconstituting public morality.

The inability of the schools to achieve this end is the complement to their contribution as the most recent and important sites for ritualistic conflicts and reforms in urban areas. Professionalization and centralization had been the cornerstones of the Progressive reformers' program for establishing a viable civic life in cities. Yet to many critics these changes only bloated school administrations and isolated them from the public. Structural reorganization had only impeded the alleged quest for a revised public morality and set of rituals that would bring the several races and classes of urban areas together. Desegregation became the means through which the schools finally might achieve that end.

Yet it too has failed, as all ritualized rebellions must, to dissolve the social contrivances--zoning and job patterns, housing and educational opportunities--which keep groups separated and frustrate efforts to build a unified community. Its success as a ritualistic conflict and reform, on the other hand, can be attributed to several factors. The first was the ascension of the underprivileged themselves as the initiators of reform efforts and advocates of coercion. It was a logical consequence of changes

in the sponsorship of such movements. This helped to create the appearance that the social order was indeed being turned upside down, because coercive tactics usually had been directed against the underprivileged. A more subtle key to the success of desegregation as a ritualized rebellion was its target for reform. Advocates of racial desegregation, like earlier proponents of social class desegregation, thought underprivileged children and the whole community would benefit from the reform. Changing people was thought to be the critical first step in a process of institutional and community change. Lost somehow was the Progressive reformers' idea that one also needed to reorganize the institutions and the rituals themselves, if people and public life were to change.

Ritualized Rebellions And The Pace of Change

Ritualized rebellions in more developed countries do not prohibit change from occurring. They can, as school desegregation and the history of other educational reform efforts illustrate, help manage the pace of change for people and ensure that some fundamental barriers between one or another class or race are left intact. The recently concluded desegregation case in St. Louis shows how this works. The original case against the city district was initiated in 1972. It yielded a voluntary, magnet school program in 1976 and a more compulsory intra-district plan four years later. While neither effort spawned violence of the sort seen in other cities, there was and continues to be a good deal of bitterness and muffled resistance to desegregation within the city. The city school system and NAACP pressed to expand the city's desegregation order so that it covered at least the 23 separate districts in contiguous St. Louis County. Several already were cooperating in a voluntary plan. All but one of these districts, however,

agreed in principle to the provisions of a voluntary exchange and magnet school program on the eve of the trial for a mandatory plan. The voluntary agreement is being hailed as an unprecedented achievement which metropolitan areas across the country will want to study closely. The real contribution of ritualized rebellions is what they help us to overlook about our social order, however, so it is important to see what sources of inequality and problems have been papered over in this artful compromise.

A review of the St. Louis County Board of Education's deliberations between the 1950s and 1970s reveals three overriding concerns among professional educators and the lay leadership: 1) the merger of all county districts with the city; 2) the equalization of school tax rates in the area; and 3) desegregation. The first two would have led to a substantial reorganization of public education and removed an important barrier to the reconsolidation of St. Louis city with the county. The third became a concern only as blacks began to make a dramatic and contested move into the county in the 1960s but would not have required massive changes in school organization and educational financing. The current proposal will not draw more attention to the disparities in wealth across districts. It does not threaten to disrupt the structured inequality evidenced in the schools that is derived from the wealth of persons living in one or another community. Districts sending students to more integrated settings would not lose state funds. Districts receiving these students would receive additional state funds. Such funds will be welcomed in districts that have been losing students and revenues, particularly in a state which does not support public education very well in the first place.

Thus, some progress has been made in helping persons recognize that they are part of a larger metropolitan area. A few steps have been taken to make the area's public institutions and civil rituals a bit more consistent with the realities of a metropolitan economy. Neither of these signs of progress, however, has been fixed in the area's political culture through the creation of a permanent institution or living memorial to that metropolitan reality. (This was the typical pattern in 19th century reform efforts when private experiments to address one or another city problem often became the basis of a public institution dedicated to that issue). Nor has progress or change been purchased at the risk of disrupting the basic social class divisions separating the city and county or among blacks (Wilson). Even a cursory review of the demographic profiles of St. Louis County communities shows that recently-arrived blacks often have income and educational levels comparable to their white neighbors and sometimes higher. City blacks fare less well relative to city whites or departed blacks. Educational observers acknowledge in private communications and public reports that black students with better academic preparation--and by extension a higher social class background--have been more likely to apply for inclusion in city/county transfers and been accepted by county districts (Clayton Citizen, March 9, 1983). The same pattern already has been evidenced by white and black city students who have volunteered to enroll in magnet schools since 1976. Desegregation in metropolitan St. Louis may end up effectively reinforcing existing social class differences even as it appears to be heralding in a new age of race relations for this modern urban area. Such is the nature of ritualistic conflicts and reforms in urban-industrial states.

Lessons In The Art Of Making Conflict

Primitive and advanced cultures exhibit similar responses to the problem of maintaining order across generations or in the face of large-scale economic and social changes. Intermittent displays of civil disorder or community conflict provide opportunities to reaffirm the importance of this problem and its permanent challenge to community members. While all such displays are governed by cultural traditions to some extent, one class of civil disorders--the ritualized rebellion--seems particularly important in ensuring that continuity and order prevail within the community or society. In primitive cultures the outbursts are occasions for persons to acknowledge inequities built into their way of life without having to reduce those disparities in any permanent fashion. In advanced cultures it is more difficult to avoid the influence of social or economic changes and the possibility that some reduction in inequality will be required. Under these circumstances the ritualized rebellion serves to soften the community's introduction to new changes by drawing attention away from the basic divisions among its several economic classes. The threat to the community's established order is reduced in this manner, if not eliminated entirely.

School desegregation provides an illustration of how this process works in an advanced urban and industrial society. Its arrival is anticipated and greeted with a good deal of apprehension, tumult, and, in some cases, violence. Persons are compelled to reconsider some ways in which their society has acted to deny certain of their fellow members a proportionate share of its wealth. The reforms introduced to achieve this end, however, do not alter the basic arrangement of social classes within the community. Indeed, the reforms may unintentionally reinforce or legitimate

the existence of such divisions by managing to avoid any definitive or direct fight over them. A case in point is the recent agreement among districts in the St. Louis area to initiate a voluntary "metropolitan" desegregation plan. It presumes that there will be no resolution to the problems posed by the area's political fragmentation across two states and into hundreds of separate municipalities, legislative, service, and school districts. It will not challenge the unequal distribution of wealth evidenced in educational expenditures; the decision ratifies that inequality by providing opportunities to supplement existing revenues through student transfers. Finally, the proposed plan will not require area residents to consider, much less do anything about, the underlying economic conditions which keep more well-to-do blacks and whites separated from their less prosperous neighbors.

Of course, these matters were never intended to be considered in any part of a final desegregation order. The controversies surrounding a decision to desegregate, though, do incorporate such questions. It is an important element in ritualistic reforms, however, that such issues be ignored so that the legitimacy of the social order not be questioned too long or severely.

The achievement of ritualized rebellions is that they constitute a cultural compromise. All cultures must find some way to draw their members' attention to the problem of inequality, or at least to the contrived nature of their solutions to it. Ritualistic conflicts and reforms negotiate a path between two culturally unpromising solutions to this dilemma. They avoid, on the one hand, the need to adopt unscheduled collective actions which really do call the legitimacy of existing

institutions into question. No society could long tolerate such challenges, no matter how valid the claimants' grievances. Perhaps that is why more successful challengers to established leaders learn to modify their demands and tactics (Gamson). On the other hand, ritualized rebellions enable groups to do more than retreat to the safety of their isolated neighborhoods and engage in satisfying, if ultimately unsuccessful, attempts to resist unwanted changes.

The kind of creaky incrementalism that would pass for meaningful social change as a result of ritualized rebellions would not satisfy many theoreticians (Long). This would be especially true of desegregation's advocates, people who have built substantial careers working under the untenable premise that we have a theory of conflict and, hence, an effective science of meddling. Yet as a compromise between chaos and ossification in our social worlds, ritualized rebellions would seem to have served us very well indeed.

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