

From Words to Action: The Political and Institutional Context for Protest

In the preceding chapters I argued that cultural conflict is an outgrowth of social change and demonstrated that cities experiencing rapid population change are more likely to experience higher than average numbers of arts conflicts. This chapter continues to investigate the structure underlying cultural conflict. In particular, how is the political culture of a city related to levels of conflict? I examine several measures of political culture, including a city's demographic and workforce composition, its levels of political engagement, its history of protest, and its public opinion climate. The chapter demonstrates that protest over art is similar to other forms of political action; it arises from similar contexts, shares similar dynamics, and is equally important for democratic life.

Scholars have long debated whether protest activity is inside or outside the political mainstream and whether it is rational and strategic or emotional and ad hoc. Charles Tilly (1978, 1986, 1995), who has empirically examined contentious politics and political claim-making historically, finds that protest is an important tool in what he considers to be an ever-expanding repertoire of contention. Most scholars of political life share Tilly's conclusion that protest is a legitimate mode of collective action. But do such conclusions about protest, in general, apply specifically to protests over art and culture? Are protests over books, paintings, sculpture, television, and film anything more than knee-jerk reactions to offense and insult, and if so, do reactions constitute a form of democratic engagement?

Critic John Ruskin once described modern art as a bucket of paint flung in the face of its audience, and artists of all genres seem to have a knack for proverbially throwing paint and pushing "hot buttons" (Carver 1994). I do not dispute the fact that arts conflicts trigger hot buttons, nor do I downplay

the role of values, emotions, and offense. Rather, I acknowledge that most people are offended, often viscerally, by something most of the time. But importantly for my purposes, not every offense finds its way into the public square. Instead protest is much more likely when the political culture is conducive.

There is a discernible structure to conflicts over art. They do not erupt spontaneously and unpredictably. Protest over art is part and parcel to democratic life and a routine way in which citizens make their voices heard. These are political acts, rational and deliberate, and they are the product of an engaged citizenry who cares about the quality of life in their communities. This chapter proceeds by first linking arts conflicts with other forms of contestation—from social movements to contentious politics. Then I examine whether arts protests, based on my cases, are handled democratically and within the bounds of normal political discourse and disagreement.

I point out five patterns concerning the relationship between political culture and the emergence and development of conflicts over art and culture. First, I demonstrate that an “unconventional political culture”—characterized by nontraditional families, highly educated knowledge workers, a high percentage of working women, and lower-than-average church attendance—is only weakly related to arts protests. Instead it appears that cities with more traditional “lifestyles” (rather than an unconventional culture) are more likely to engage in conflict over art and media. Second, I argue that cities with engaged and active citizens are also likely to have more protests. In contrast, when people are disengaged or disinterested in the life of their community, they are unlikely to exert the effort—and risk the social consequences—of raising a ruckus. It is easier to exit, in the words of Albert Hirschman (1970), than to take the risk of making one’s voice heard. Third, I suggest that citizens are attuned to the protest culture of their communities. They are informed by prior collective action events, against which they judge the appropriateness of current protest. In cities with a long history of protest, residents are aware of and accept protest as a legitimate means of political action. In other communities, protest is frowned upon or quietly discouraged, and there is a politics of politeness, a respect for authority, and a willingness to accept the status quo. Finally, citizens and officials are aware of the public opinion climate and are more likely to take a public stand against an artwork in places where the climate is sympathetic to their complaint. There are more conservative-based protests (related to obscenity, pornography, homosexuality, violence, and blasphemy) in cities with a conservative climate of opinion, and the opposite is true for liberal-based

protests (related to issues of concern to ethnic minorities, women, and sexual and religious minorities).

Dispatches from the Arts Front

Most people can recite the popular nursery rhyme: “Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you.” Yet people get hurt by words over and over again, in different contexts, across different demographic groups, different historical moments, and different communities. Social scientists who believe that all human action is rational and calculated are puzzled by arts protests. What rational explanation could account for the time, cost, and social risk involved in protesting a book, film, or song? Such cultural objects have no *obvious* impact on our material existence—how much money we make, our political rights, the safety of our neighborhood, the fairness and equity of our wages, or the accessibility of affordable housing, good schools, or health care.¹ At the same time, cultural sociologists recognize the power and importance of public symbols and words, which, as discussed in chapters 2 and 3, can influence community identity, promote or denigrate the status of individuals, help establish boundaries between groups, and shape political allegiances. It turns out that words do, indeed, matter. Therefore, any observer sensitive to the importance of culture (above and beyond strategic action in the service of material interests) will not be surprised to find that people routinely fight over words. Nonetheless, many (especially faculty colleagues) are surprised when I share dispatches from the front: examples of protest that show up in news accounts every day. There is the story of the owner of a local bookstore in Dayton who, for more than a year, launched an anonymous campaign to vandalize books in local libraries that dealt with the topic of homosexuality. Referred to as the “unipooper” by the local police, his protest typically involved defecating on the offensive reading material and leaving a note behind that said he was the guardian of decency in the community. Another group of Dayton residents protested an exhibition in a local government building that included one painting that featured the yin-yang symbol, representing the unity of opposites in Chinese philosophy, and another painting that featured the skull of a cow with horns. Both paintings were deemed “satanic” by the protesters. Veterans in Phoenix stormed an exhibition featuring the work of artist Dread Scott, including the installation titled *The Proper Way to Display the U.S. Flag*, physically removing an American flag from the museum floor and struggling with museum guards. In Charlotte,

North Carolina, county commissioners, supported by local church groups and activist organizations, eliminated all county funds for the arts because a city-supported theater presented the Tony Award-winning play *Angels in America*. *Angels* includes a few seconds of fleeting frontal nudity as well as themes about AIDS and the gay community. In Raleigh, North Carolina, the school district's assistant superintendent, having received a complaint from a parent, banned the popular dance "The Macarena" because it is supposedly too suggestive—the dance ends with a hip thrust to the lyrics "Ehhh! Macarena!" Or consider the frequent complaints over Mark Twain's classic novel *Huckleberry Finn* for its use of the word "nigger." This book has been in schools and libraries for close to one hundred years, universally accepted as one of the great American novels, and praised for its sensitive account of race; still, some parents demand that it be taken off the shelves or removed from a reading list. Others show up outside concert venues with candles to protest Marilyn Manson and other shock rockers and to pray for the teenagers who willingly go inside to enjoy music. Parents and religious groups throughout the country participate in boycotts of, and in one case sued, the Disney Company, in part because animated films are thought to contain subliminal messages promoting drug use and teenage sex.

In recounting this abridged list of cases in my study, it is easy to see how people might form the opinion that these cases reveal unchecked emotional and rash reactions to relatively harmless cultural expression. Many complaints and protests seem "over the top" and outside the political mainstream. Frequently, defenders of an artwork label opponents "ignorant," "backward," "zealots," and "out of touch."

This tendency to discredit or marginalize protest over art is commonplace among many intellectuals, journalists, and free expression advocates. In the People for the American Way's (PFAW) multivolume series *Artistic Freedom under Attack* (1993, 1994, 1995, 1996), conflicts over art are described as expressions of "intolerance" often coming from the "far right," "rear guards," and "political and religious extremists." Protests are described as "distorted attacks" that "reflect the widespread sense of frustration and even rage that now permeates American culture" (1995, 9). In the introduction to volume four, the chair of PFAW, Carole Shields, describes protest as arising from a "small but determined lot" in contrast to the "thousands of Americans" who are willing to stand up for freedom of expression (1996, 10).

Further marginalizing their political role, the efforts of arts protesters are often depicted as flashes of irrational behavior. John Harer and Steven Harris (1994) write that "the pressure for censorship on a personal level is too often driven by the emotional moment" (xiv). Librarian David

Berninghausen (1975), in defending intellectual freedom, describes attempts to restrict books as “flights from reason.” Thomas Birch, a Washington lobbyist, refers to arts conflicts as the “raw nerve” of politics (1995, 17). Elaine Sharp characterizes “morality politics”—including fights over art and culture—as a type of “extraordinary politics” because of the passion, stridency, and intensity that people bring with them to the fight (1999, 4). Many scholars think about culture war disputes as “fights to the finish,” imbued with moral passion that makes compromise difficult. Yet democracy requires its citizens to compromise, or at the very least to recognize that opposing sides have a right to make claims. In this respect, arts protests, along with other culture war disputes, seem inherently undemocratic and linked to intolerance and incivility. Overall, these accounts place cultural conflict at the margins rather than the center of democratic life.

This view of protest over art as a type of “extreme” politics—defined by passion, spontaneity, irrational behavior, and fanaticism—has its roots in early scholarly writing about collective protest in the 1950s. Then, many sociologists and political scientists—concerned with populist movements in Europe—saw collective protest as dysfunctional, irrational, and inherently undesirable and described those who joined as disconnected from intermediate associations that would link them with more productive and less disruptive social pursuits (Kornhauser 1959; Meyer 2004). The assumption was that social movements and protests represented alternatives to, rather than expressions of, politics. Studies of farmworker protests, labor unrest, riots, nativist movements, and other forms of “disruptive politics” treated protest as arising from a combination of feelings of strain (when groups in society confront severe obstacles to social, economic, and political mobility) and the effects of mass society (the powerlessness and alienation that accompany the rise of modern corporations, mass media, and large-scale bureaucracies). In short, non-routine collective protests were signs that democracy—personified by political parties, elections, the courts, and legitimate and responsive bureaucracy—was breaking down.

Today social scientists generally disavow the notion that protest is the result of irrational actors on the margins of society (Rule 1988; Schwartz 1976; McAdam 1982). Instead, protests are seen as part of social movements that rely on a high degree of organization, goal-oriented strategic action, and access to political and economic elites. Protest participants are viewed as strategic actors who are embedded in dense social networks (McVeigh 1995). Social movement scholars acknowledge that protest may involve non-routine and disruptive tactics like demonstrations, but these tactics are seen as “resources” to get attention or shape a policy agenda.

Protests often arise from within existing organizations, involve leaders with previous political experience, and draw upon tactics that have worked in the past (McCammon et al. 2008).

Not only are social movements and protest politics rational and strategic, but also the people who join such efforts tend to be engaged and politically active. As Rory McVeigh and Christian Smith (1999) note: “Our results show that protest participants are similar in many respects to those who participate actively in institutionalized politics. In particular, we find that people who are involved in other forms of organized activity are also considerably more likely to be involved in institutionalized politics and the politics of protest” (697). John Green and his colleagues find that people who protest are more likely to be volunteers, go to church regularly, and participate in community organizations (Green et al. 1996).

Scholars see protest over everything from the environment to animal rights, abortion, and the arts as integral to a new form of lifestyle politics. In postindustrial societies, conventional politics that involve political parties, elections, labor unions, the courts, and government agencies are increasingly giving way to “expressive politics” (Clark and Hoffmann-Martinot 1998). Rather than organizing around economic interests, people are engaged in new forms of protest that serve to affirm their identities, assert their values, and express their voice. This new political culture emphasizes identity and lifestyle. In short, “the personal is political.” From this perspective, arts conflicts are “real politics” in the context of today’s shifting political landscape (Sharp 2005a, 2005b).

Are arts protests really similar to other forms of protest and collective action? Do we really think taking swipes at statues, complaining about classic novels like *Huckleberry Finn*, burning books in front of Barnes and Nobles, and holding prayer vigils in front of a Marilyn Manson concert are examples of politics as usual—routine, rational, predictable? Do protests over art constitute a sort of social movement, as emerging scholarship suggests? Are these efforts geared toward institutional change? Do they engage or flow through conventional political channels? Are they legitimate, healthy, democratic, and civil? Do arts protests have a discernable set of processes or mechanisms? Are they rooted in organizations and politically oriented groups? Is cultural conflict typical of the “lifestyle politics” that define the new political culture? Do these efforts constitute collective “protest,” or are they just routine complaints, randomly occurring offenses, or irrational outbursts?

Like other forms of protest, cultural conflict is complex and multifaceted. Nonetheless, there are some consistent elements. As I have defined it, a

conflict requires a public action that challenges some form of expression deemed inappropriate or offensive. Typically, the public action is directed toward a person or institution of authority—someone who has decision-making power over what forms of expression are presented publicly. Ultimately, arts conflicts involve public claims-making, challenges to existing power structures (institutions and gatekeepers who decide the content of our cultural life), and frequently collective action. Importantly, they draw from the same “repertoires of contention” that can be found in other social and political movements. Jeff Larson and Sarah Soule (2003) outline seventeen different forms or “repertoires” of collective action. Table 5.1 provides a list of each form of collective action in column A; examples of an arts conflict that utilized that form of protest are provided in column B.

While *forms* of protest like those listed in table 5.1 are only one way to characterize political action (we could also focus on goals, strategies of mobilization, characteristics of participants, nature of claims, or targets of protest), it is clear that arts protesters draw from the same repertoire as activists involved in fights over housing, roads, taxes, schools, public services, civil rights, and military conflicts. Arts protests might not exactly embody Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow’s (2006) notion of contentious politics, nor might these conflicts strictly constitute a social movement, but they are not a breed apart either. Arts protesters are familiar with and draw upon a wide range of tactics to make claims and influence the type of art and entertainment available in their communities. While not the task of this book, it would be useful and important to look more carefully at how arts conflicts connect with other forms of protest and social movement activity. In what ways are they similar or different? Are arts conflicts more expressive (aimed at voicing discontent) than instrumental (aimed at policy changes)? Are they more or less easily resolved compared to other community-based protest? Are national actors more or less likely to become involved? Are participants different—in terms of demographic characteristics—than participants involved in other types of collective action? In short, how does the *structure* of arts protest compare to the structure of other kinds of political action?

Even in the absence of studying and comparing the inner workings of arts conflicts, it is possible to see how the types of structures and contexts that predict other forms of protest do or do not predict arts protests. In particular, are politically and civically engaged communities more likely to protest art and culture? If the political culture and context of a community does not consistently predict arts conflicts, then perhaps such episodes are nothing more than neighborly disputes (no different from a complaint about a fence built over a neighbor’s property line), disputes that might be

Table 5.1 Forms of collective action

Form of collective action	Example from sample of arts conflicts between 1995 and 1998
1. Rally/Demonstration	A local chapter of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) demonstrates in front of a Portland movie theater that is showing <i>Braveheart</i> . One speaker was quoted in the press as saying, "The message of this film is that gay men are idiot effeminate and when they're really annoying, it's OK to get rid of them."
2. March (moving from one location to another)	No example
3. Vigil (candlelight vigil, prayer, silent witness)	In Greensboro, North Carolina, nearly 80 people held a prayer vigil outside the arena in which shock rock group Marilyn Manson was scheduled to perform.
4. Picket (holding signs and placards and walking around in a circle)	On August 25, 1997, an ad hoc citizens group with 250 members picketed outside two Wichita bookstores to protest Jock Sturges's book of photography—which includes pictures of nude children and teenagers.
5. Civil disobedience (crossing barricades, sit-ins, tying up phone lines, and some forms of violence)	Two Christian songs were banned from the repertoire of a public school choir in Salt Lake City because of a restraining order filed by a Jewish student. Christian students disrupted the school's graduation ceremony, seizing the microphone, and encouraging the audience to sing one of the banned songs.
6. Ceremony (celebrate or protest anniversaries or other commemorative dates)	African Americans protested a ceremony organized by the Sons of Confederate Veterans to rededicate a 50-year-old Confederate monument outside Howard County Circuit Courthouse in Ellicott City, Maryland. African Americans argued that the ceremony was an endorsement of the Confederate cause, and therefore the ceremony should not have been allowed because the monument was a tribute to the cause of slavery.
7. Dramaturgical demonstration (concerts, theatrical presentation, dance)	An organization known as Performers and Artists for Nuclear Disarmament (PAND) staged a "guerilla theater" performance in Akron, Ohio, to protest the local symphony's decision to play a tribute concert in recognition of the city's support of a nuclear-powered submarine.
8. Motorcade	No example
9. Information distribution (petitions, lobbying, letter writing)	In Bangor, Maine, residents organized a letter-writing campaign to several stores that sell punk music and punk music paraphernalia, arguing that such material promotes Satanism, death, vampires, and erotica. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a petition bearing 285 signatures was presented to library officials requesting a ban on the circulation and purchase of R-rated videos
10. Symbolic display (cross burning, signs, graffiti)	At a community rally against violence, crime, and drugs in Philadelphia, youths donated gangsta rap tapes to be burned en masse during the rally.

Table 5.1 (continued)

Form of collective action	Example from sample of arts conflicts between 1995 and 1998
11. Attack by instigators (physical attack or verbal threats instigated by a group)	In mid-April 1995, about 20 people, including members of the Morris County Right to Life, protested outside a theater in Chatham because they objected to the portrayal of Catholic clergy in <i>Priest</i> . A few days later the theater in Chatham as well as one in Union received bomb threats. The owner of the two theaters decided to stop showing the film due to the protests and threats.
12. Riot, melee, mob violence	No example
13. Strike/slow-down/sick-in	In Dallas, Texas, Vietnamese immigrants and veteran organizations protested an exhibit of contemporary Vietnamese art at a local art center. The protesters organized demonstrations and a two-day hunger strike. In Salt Lake City, Utah, teachers threaten a "sick-in"—staying home sick—to protest parents' efforts to ban Isabel Allende's famous novel <i>The House of the Spirits</i> from an advanced English class.
14. Boycott	A Tulsa-area Baptist church joined the national Southern Baptists in boycotting the Walt Disney Company because of the company's "significant departure from Disney's family values image."
15. Press conference	Prior to a school board meeting in Pittsburgh, the ACLU and local parents hold a press conference to voice their opposition to a proposal to pull two books <i>Bridge to Terabithia</i> and <i>Julie of the Wolves</i> from the fifth- and sixth-grade curriculum on the grounds of profanity and religious denigration.
16. Public announcement of new organization	No example
17. Lawsuit	A lawyer in Houston filed a suit against Harris County Judge John Devine because of religious decor in the judge's courtroom, including artwork depicting the tablets of the Ten Commandments and other religious scenes.

Source: Forms of collective action derived from Jeff Larson and Sarah Soule, "Organizational Resources and Repertoires of Collective Action." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Atlanta, GA, August 16, 2003.

more visible and incite more passion, but, in the end, no more meaningful to democratic life and political engagement.

Before I examine the political context for the emergence and development of arts conflicts, I want to consider the responsiveness of officials to claims made against artworks. Specifically, I ask whether these claims are

Table 5.2 How is grievance to an official or administrator handled?

Response to grievance	Frequency	Percent
Undemocratic response		
Ignored the complaint	32	6.0
Made an executive/unilateral decision	<u>166</u>	<u>30.0</u>
Subtotal	198	36.0
Democratic response		
Discussed at regularly scheduled meetings of board/ council	115	21.0
Called a special meeting of regularly constituted group	29	5.0
Called a special meeting of ad hoc group	24	4.0
Called a special open meeting or public hearing	19	3.0
Deferred the decision to standing committee	<u>126</u>	<u>23.0</u>
Subtotal	353	56.0
Other		7.0
Total responses	551	100
No request made to an official or administrator	254	
Total	805	

responded to democratically through processes of deliberation, debate, and review by elected officials and responsible administrators. Table 5.2 reveals that 56 percent of all claims that were made to an elected official or responsible administrator (public librarian, school board member, school principal, radio station owner, or museum director) were handled in one of five ways. Complaints were: (1) discussed at a regularly scheduled meeting of a board or council; (2) discussed at a special, ad hoc meeting of a regularly constituted group (for example, the school board comes together at a special meeting to discuss a contested policy); (3) discussed at a meeting of an ad hoc group (for example, the mayor asks a task force to review policies for exhibiting art on city property); (4) discussed at an open meeting or public hearing; (5) handed off to a standing committee to review. In contrast, 36 percent of all claims were either ignored or handled by executive fiat. That is, a unilateral decision was made with no public debate or discussion. In 254 cases there was no formal complaint to an administrator or official. For example, a group might hold a rally or prayer vigil to “bear witness” to some offending artwork or presentation without actually asking anyone to do something about it. Significantly though, in the 551 cases where a specific request was made, most were handled through some democratic process. Again, this provides additional circumstantial evidence that arts conflicts share more in common with “routine” politics than with “extreme” politics.

Not only are the majority of arts conflicts resolved through democratic deliberation, but also there is evidence that many of the opponents and defenders of an artwork recognize the legitimacy of the process and accept the final outcome, whether or not their claim is successful. For example, in Minneapolis protesters regrouped after a failed attempt to get city officials to ban a Marilyn Manson concert and held a peaceful demonstration outside the stadium, noting that if they couldn't stop the concert, they could at least "bring God's attention to the area" (Nightshade 2007, A24). In Knoxville, the general manager of a community television station acknowledged that the city had a right to regulate an adult show after multiple complaints, public hearings, and city commission meetings. He noted, "If the city council chooses to set community standards for public access cable . . . then Community Television will enforce those rules" (Balloch 1998, A3). In Las Vegas, after the school board decided to ban a school trip to a museum to see an exhibit about AIDS, the museum's public affairs coordinator commended the board for "listening to the concerns of the community" and "trying to make the best judgment" (Patton 1996, B1). In case after case of arts protest, participants acknowledged and accepted the decisions of administrators and officials when those decisions involved bureaucratic review, deliberation, and what appeared to be a fair and open process.

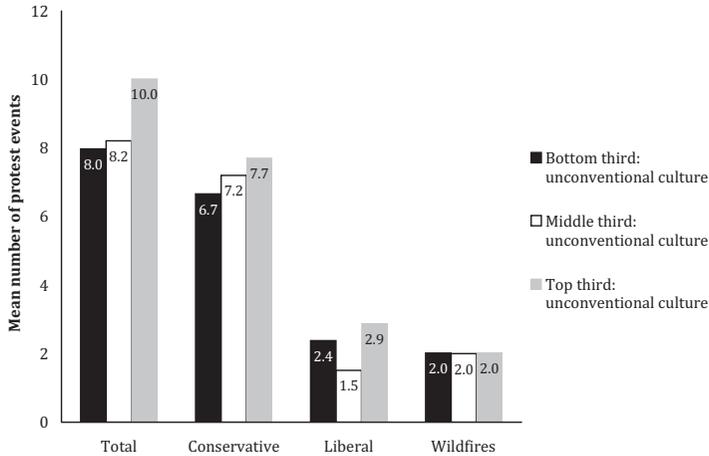
The Effect of Unconventional Political Culture versus Traditional Culture on Arts Conflict

Since the 1960s, the most popular way to think about local political culture was through the lens of Daniel Elazar's (1966) typology of political subcultures—individualistic, moralistic, and traditionalistic. Individualistic culture is based in a deep belief in the market and in the power of individuals to negotiate and bargain for private gain. A moralistic culture is characterized by the belief in collective enterprise and the role of citizens working together for the common good. In a traditionalistic culture, politics are viewed as an arena in which citizens defer to the judgments of elites and most people favor the preservation of the status quo. There have been many revisions to Elazar's scheme in the last several decades. Each new refinement focuses on how cities differ in fundamental ways in terms of how citizens think about the role of government and the nature of citizenship. Today, issues of ethnic, linguistic, sexual, and religious identity are at the forefront of politics, as are issues related to the environment, animal rights, and globalization (Clark and Inglehart 1998; Sharp 2005a). At the metropolitan level, Sharp characterizes this "new political culture" as an "unconventional political

culture.” Using census-level data and aggregate data on religious participation, Sharp’s index of unconventional culture incorporates five factors: (1) high levels of education, (2) high levels of technical and creative workers (the creative class), (3) high levels of single-parent or nontraditional families, (4) high levels of women in the workplace, and (5) and low levels of church or religious adherence.² While “lifestyle politics” often revolve around what some might consider liberal-based grievances (ethnic identity, women’s issues, or the environment), Sharp and others acknowledge that politics based on religious values also fit within this new political culture. As argued in chapter 2, arts conflicts are very much about “lifestyle” as opposed to issues related to material well-being like employment and housing. Like other lifestyle issues, people fight over art because such battles connect to their personal identities, their sense of right and wrong, and their desire to express and validate their beliefs and values. Therefore, we would expect that cities with a more unconventional political culture would fight more over art and culture.

Following Sharp, I employ an index to capture unconventional political culture that includes numbers of college graduates, nontraditional families (unmarried families and single-parent families), workers in creative occupations, employment levels for working-age women, and levels of church attendance. Not surprisingly, unconventional political culture and protests over art are positively correlated. Using a statistical technique known as General Linear Modeling (see the methodological appendix), I find that average-sized cities ranked in the top third in terms of unconventional cultures (cities such as Seattle, Raleigh, Nashville, Austin, and Albuquerque) experienced approximately ten protest events in the late 1990s compared to only eight events for averaged-sized cities ranked in the bottom third of the unconventional culture index (cities such as Knoxville, Greensboro, Pittsburgh, Louisville, Allentown) (see figure 5.1).³ The same pattern holds when comparing the number of protests that originate in conservative grievances (for example, homosexuality, indecency, or blasphemy) or those that originate in liberal grievances (for example, offense to ethnic minorities, women, and religious minorities). However, using more sophisticated multiple regression techniques and additional control variables (see models in methodological appendix), I find that the relationship between unconventional culture and protest over art appears to disappear.

In many ways our measure of unconventional culture emphasizes an underlying cosmopolitanism—highly educated citizens working in creative occupations who are less bound to traditional structures of community and family. While such markers of cosmopolitanism may be linked to a certain

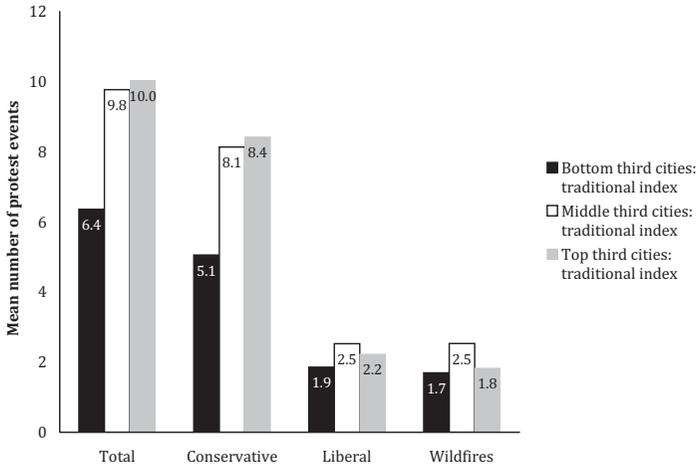


5.1 Comparing number of protest events by levels of unconventional political culture^a

Note: Mean number of protest events controls for both population size and changes in the foreign-born population, which are two of the strongest predictors of arts conflict when included in a multiple regression model. Additionally, the city of Hartford was removed from the analysis because it is an outlier in terms of protest events, as it was more than three standard deviations from the mean.

^aUnconventional Political Culture Index is derived from Sharp (2002) and includes the following variables: college graduates, nontraditional families (unmarried families and single-parent families), workers in creative occupations, employment levels for working-age women, and levels of church attendance.

type of lifestyle politics—feminism, environmentalism, animal rights, quality of life issues, and such—they may *not* be linked to the lifestyle politics surrounding most arts protests, which often focus on concerns about community identity, traditional values, and family life. If this is true, then perhaps a more “traditional” culture, rather than an “unconventional culture” will have a stronger relationship to arts conflicts. One way to measure traditional culture is to examine the reading interests of community members. It turns out that some cities have much higher subscription rates to magazines that focus on community and family life (for example, *Family Circle*, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *Reader’s Digest*), while others have higher subscription rates to more cosmopolitan magazines (for example, *Food and Wine*, the *New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*). Comparing such differences, I believe, is a reasonable way to differentiate cities as having either a cosmopolitan or traditional political culture. And it turns out that those cities with a higher Traditional Index score (based on magazine subscriptions) have much higher rates of arts protests—5.1 versus 8.4 (see figure 5.2). And unlike our measure of unconventional culture, traditional culture turns out to be one of the strongest



5.2 Comparing number of protest events by levels of traditional index^a

Note: Mean number of protest events controls for both population size and changes in the foreign-born population, which are two of the strongest predictors of arts conflict when included in a multiple regression model. Additionally, the city of Hartford was removed from the analysis because it is an outlier in terms of protest events, as it was more than three standard deviations from the mean.

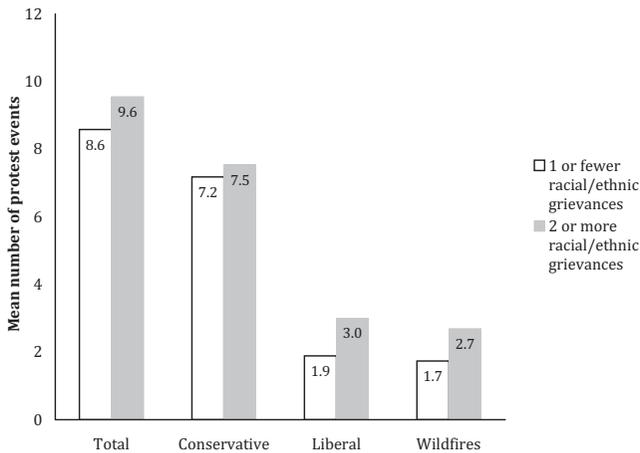
^aTraditional Lifestyle Index is a scale based on subscriptions to a set of magazines that represent a traditional home and family orientation, including *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Country Living*, *Family Circle*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Reader's Digest*. The Index is divided into three categories for purposes of comparison—bottom third of the index, middle third, and the top third of the index.

predictors of arts conflicts even when analyzed using more sophisticated statistical techniques (see the methodological appendix).

The Effect of History of Protest

Political culture describes the values and political orientation of a community's citizens and also describes and characterizes the *way* a community engages in politics. Are opposing sides confrontational or conciliatory? Do ordinary folks get involved, or does political work get done primarily by elites? Many factors influence a city's style of politics, but one important factor, often overlooked by scholars, is a city's history of protest and activism. Some cities are more contentious than others, whether fighting over art, civil rights, or land use. Using data from Robert Putnam's study of civic engagement (see chapter 2), there is evidence that people protest at different rates across different cities. For example, in Philadelphia 12 percent of respondents say they participated in a protest or demonstration; in Dayton 23

percent and in Santa Rosa 26 percent of residents participated in protests. In Hartford only 18 percent of citizens have signed a petition, whereas 54 percent have done so in San Diego. Of course, individual participation is only one measure of protest culture. For example, Chicago and Philadelphia do not appear to be high protest cities when examining reported citizen engagement, yet each of these cities has a history of visible protest. In fact, data collected by Susan Olzak on the number of ethnically related protests and demonstrations in American cities between 1954 and 1992 reveal that Chicago and Philadelphia are among the most contentious, with eighty-seven and thirty protests, respectively, compared to three cases in Denver, seven in Dallas, and eight in Buffalo. Clearly, a history of contentious politics where citizens routinely make claims in the public square informs current levels of protest. Not only do activists learn from past episodes and adjust their



5.3 Comparing number of racial/ethnic conflicts in the 1970s and 1980s with the number of arts conflicts in the 1990s^a

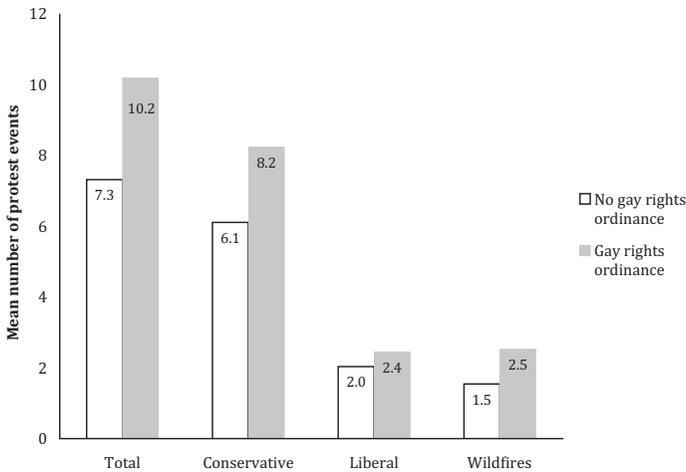
Note: Mean number of protest events controls for both population size and changes in the foreign-born population, which are two of the strongest predictors of arts conflict when included in a multiple regression model. Additionally, the city of Hartford was removed from the analysis because it is an outlier in terms of protest events, as it was more than three standard deviations from the mean.

^aNumber of racial/ethnic conflicts is derived from data collected by Susan Olzak. Olzak's data on ethnic protest includes demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, and other disruptive tactics aimed at addressing civil rights, schools, housing, and other issues related to the concerns of ethnic minorities. The data, which covers events that took place in the 1970s and 1980s, is divided into two categories for the purposes of comparison: those cities with two more racial/ethnic conflicts during this period; and those cities with one or fewer recorded ethnic conflicts.

strategies accordingly, but citizens also figure out the norms of their community, such as what are appropriate and inappropriate ways to make claims and express discontent (McCammon et al. 2008; Tilly 2006). In some places, protest is de rigeur; in others, it is unfashionable.

While protest culture is difficult to measure, Olzak's data offer a reasonable proxy and is used to gauge the culture of the cities in this sample. Figure 5.3 shows that once we account for the size of a city and immigration rates, we see that cities with one or fewer racial conflicts from 1954 to 1992 had an estimated 8.6 total conflicts over art, while cities with two or more racial protests experienced an estimated 9.6 protests, a 12 percent difference. In addition, the presence of earlier ethnic protests consistently predicts the number of wildfires⁴—the most intense cultural conflicts—and the number of conflicts based in liberal concerns.

Another indication of the protest culture of a city is the extent to which gay rights advocates have successfully made claims on city government; that is, whether or not a city has passed a gay rights ordinance that provides for domestic partnership benefits or contains antidiscrimination clauses. In some cases, ordinances were passed after visible and contentious pro-



5.4 Comparing number of protest events for cities with and without a gay rights ordinance

Note: Mean number of protest events controls for both population size and changes in the foreign-born population, which are two of the strongest predictors of arts conflict.

Additionally, the city of Hartford was removed from the analysis because it is an outlier in terms of protest events, as it was more than three standard deviations from the mean.

Source: Data collected on gay rights ordinances was provided by Richard Button at Florida State University.

test and demonstrations. In other instances, ordinances were passed more quietly (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997). In either case, the presence of an ordinance might be a sign of an activist political subculture, an example of the new political culture discussed above, or a sign that city officials are open to the claims of activists (for example, the political opportunities are favorable for protesters). Not surprisingly, cities with gay rights ordinances (most of which were passed in the 1980s) were more likely to fight over art and culture in the 1990s. Figure 5.4 shows that cities with a gay rights ordinance on the books had an estimated 2.9 more conflicts than those with no ordinance (10.2 and 7.3, respectively) and one additional wildfire (2.5 and 1.5, respectively). If racial protests and the passage of gay rights ordinances capture, to some extent, “protest culture,” then the findings above provide additional evidence that arts conflicts are deeply connected to the ongoing political dynamics and culture of a city.

The Effect of Civic Engagement on the Levels and Intensity of Conflict

In *Democracy in America*, nineteenth-century social theorist Alexis de Tocqueville offered many prescient insights into the unique workings of American democracy (Tocqueville 1994 [1835]). In particular, he praised America’s rich associational life (the abundance of clubs, churches, mutual societies, and voluntary associations), which he felt had a defining influence on the propensity for Americans to leave their individual shells and join in the affairs of their community. Tocqueville argued that voluntarism, voting, and associationalism created “habits of the heart”—norms that promote public spiritedness and reciprocity (287). In recent years scholars have revisited the themes in *Democracy in America* in an effort to understand today’s political culture and the factors that lead to an active and engaged citizenry (Bellah et al. 1985; Newton 1997; Putnam 2000; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993; Schudson 1996). Like Tocqueville, these scholars tend to focus on the collective and consensual democratic outcomes that result from high levels of civic engagement. A vibrant civic life has been linked to economic productivity, government efficacy, an increase in community service (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993; Putnam 1995), investment in education (Goldin and Katz, 1999), and general levels of civility and tolerance (Almond and Verba, 1965; Newton 1997). Yet these scholars have largely ignored the role of civic engagement in fostering conflict, cleavages, and disagreement.⁵ Perhaps a robust civic culture not only strengthens the common enterprise but also plays a role in fostering opposing enterprises.⁶

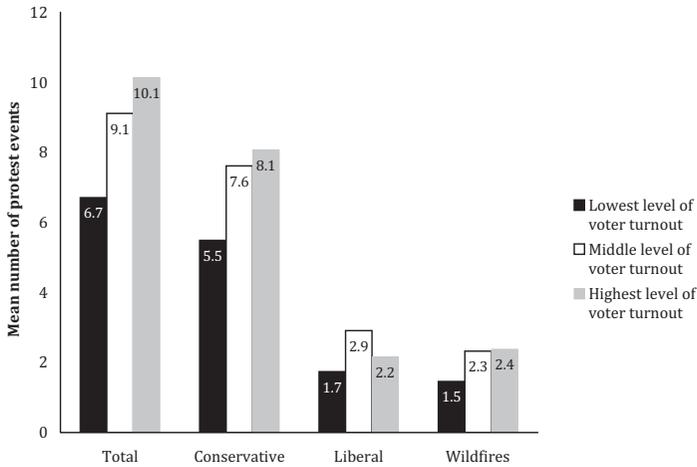
As noted in the introduction, James Coleman (1957) identifies community attachment and social integration as important elements in determining the level and intensity of conflict in a community. In his opinion, citizens who are more attached to and integrated into their communities tend to feel more strongly about its shape and future and thus are more likely to involve themselves in local affairs. As Coleman writes, “With strong attachment, people are greatly concerned with what is happening to their community and will fight more quickly to see it go the way they want it to. . . . In effect, communities whose members are highly involved will have more controversies, and feeling will be more intense about the issues” (4). According to this argument, an active and engaged citizenry will lead to political participation of all kinds. Sometimes the focus of this participation will be on public goods or collective benefits. At other times it might be linked to community conflict, including conflict over art and cultural expression.

It is worth noting, however, that some scholars, like those who see protest as irrational and outside the political mainstream, have argued the exact opposite. For these scholars, conflict over moral and cultural issues results from political and social alienation rather than attachment and engagement. For example, many critics of mass culture have linked the rise of conservative or extreme political movements, participation in riots, and other nondemocratic forms of participation with the disintegration of social ties and the breakdown of community life in modern society (Arendt 1958; Gusfield 1962; Mannheim and Shils 1940; Ransford 1968; Selznick 1951). They argue that individuals who feel estranged from the daily political and social life of their communities are more likely to join political movements that are anti-democratic in nature. Similarly, Erika Doss (1995, 135) argues that conflicts over art are, in many respects, the results of a disengaged and disenfranchised citizenry. She writes, “Angered by perceptions of powerlessness and manipulation, growing numbers of Americans have targeted public art to question their role in the relevance and direction of civic life” (14). While Doss considers public involvement in arts controversies to be an important avenue of democratic participation (in contrast to the types of extremism cited above), her premise leads to the same conclusion about the relationship between engagement and cultural conflict—the lack of social ties and political participation, rather than their presence, leads to more conflict. The question remains, does an active and engaged citizenry and a vibrant civic culture, or its opposite, lead to more conflict?

How can we measure the extent to which a city has a thriving civic culture—high levels of participation, broad social integration, and widespread

interest in community life? One measure of community engagement, at least political engagement, is level of voter turnout in a city or metropolitan statistical area (MSA). In discussing a conflict over fluoridation of water supplies, Coleman (1957) cites voting statistics as a measure of the extent to which citizens are apathetic or disengaged from community affairs. Others have used voting statistics as a proxy for political engagement (Campbell et al. 1967; Kaufman 1999; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1968; Putnam 1995).

Voting is, of course, only one form of political participation. Citizens might also participate by donating money or time to a political cause, by contacting an elected official, by working on a campaign, or by simply talking about political affairs with neighbors and friends. Although voting is not the most active form of participation, it is arguably the foundation upon which many other forms of participation rest. As Raymond Wolfinger and Steven Rosenstone (1980) argue, "Elections are at the core of the American political system . . . and for most Americans, voting is the only form



5.5 Comparing number of protest events by level of voter turnout^a

Note: Mean number of protest events controls for both population size and changes in the foreign-born population, which are two of the strongest predictors of arts conflict.

Additionally, the city of Hartford was removed from the analysis because it is an outlier in terms of protest events, as it was more than three standard deviations from the mean.

^aLowest level of voter turnout represents cities ranked in bottom one-third in terms of voter turnout for the 1992 presidential election. Middle level of voter turnout represents cities ranking in middle one-third in terms of voter turnout. Highest level of voter turnout represents cities ranking in top one-third in terms of voter turnout.

of political participation" (1). In short, communities where people do not vote will probably not excel in other forms of political participation either. Thus I use measures of "voter turnout" in the 1992 presidential election to gauge the extent to which citizens are engaged in and aware of the affairs of their community. The U.S. presidential election, rather than local races (for example, mayor or city council), is used in order to control for differences among cities in terms of the competitiveness of races and the presence or absence of strong incumbents, factors that might influence voter turnout year to year.

Figure 5.5 shows that higher levels of voter turnout consistently predict higher levels of protest across all types of conflict. In the third of the cities with the lowest voter turnout rates (where, on average, less than 55 percent of residents voted in 1992), citizens protested artworks 6.7 times on average. In the third of the cities with the highest voter turnout rates (on average more than 61 percent of citizens voted in 1992), citizens protested artworks 10.1 times. This relationship holds true for conservative-only protests as well as wildfires. At the same time, liberal-based protests seem higher in those cities with middle-range voter turnout. In general, though, cities where people vote are also places where people fight over art and cultural expression.

The Effect of Public Opinion on the Emergence of Cultural Conflict

In fall 2004 I taught a freshman seminar at Vanderbilt University that explored the culture wars. On the first day of class, I passed out an anonymous survey asking people why they took the class, which culture war issues they paid most attention to, and whether or not they considered themselves liberal or conservative. The small class was evenly divided among liberals, conservatives, and those students who considered themselves somewhere in the middle. One student, Tom, was a member of the Young Republicans and an ROTC scholar and was particularly vocal and animated, making his opinions known from the very first day of class. In the first few weeks, other students challenged Tom, but over the course of the semester, the climate of opinion in the room shifted dramatically toward the right. Students who shared Tom's opinions spoke up. Those who disagreed stayed quiet. If a visitor had joined the class by the end of the semester, they would certainly have misread the true distribution of opinion. When I privately queried one of the quieter students at the end of the semester, he told me that he didn't feel comfortable speaking out in a room where *most* people disagreed with him.

My students and I experienced what Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1984) terms the "spiral of silence." Based on her study of political opinion in Europe, she demonstrates that in the months leading up to a national election, individual voters have an extraordinary ability to monitor and detect slight shifts in the political winds or climate of opinion. When a citizen feels that the opinion climate has shifted away from their own beliefs or preferences, they will be more reluctant to express their views in public. This further reinforces their original perception, as more and more people with opposing views feel increasingly comfortable expressing themselves, while those in the perceived minority increasingly stay quiet. Just like in my class, individuals who perceived that their opinions differed from most of their neighbors and co-workers chose to swallow their views rather than risk social isolation and ridicule. Or as Ted Jelen (1992) has written, "Social approval or approbation serves as a force by which an individual comes into conformity with his or her environment" (692).

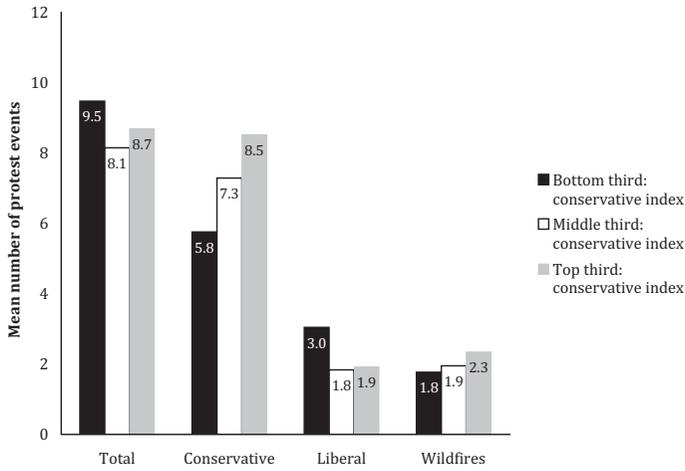
The notion of the "spiral of silence" is very much in keeping with much of the research in political science on "context effects." There is abundant evidence—whether looking at anti-busing activists (Weatherford 1980), gay rights activists (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997; Linneman 2003), sex education (Hess and Leal, 1999), or pornography (Rodgers 1974)—that "if the political culture does not reinforce political diversity and respect nonconformity, individuals with unpopular views may perceive significant repercussions for expressing their opinions" (Gibson 1992, 343). In fact, Rodgers (1974) found in his investigation of censorship and pornography that "community standards" play a strong role in an individual's decision to join a censorship campaign. Citizens who were offended by what they considered obscene material would not speak out in certain cities for fear of being labeled as "cranks, censors or members of the lunatic fringe" (383). Similarly, Joe Cook, the executive director of the American Civil Liberty Union in Louisiana, told me in an interview that many potential arts censorship cases never get ignited because the ACLU is unable to find a plaintiff who is willing to risk being ostracized by coming forward with a suit (Cook 1999).

In addition to influencing the probability that a parent or citizen will speak out, the public opinion climate can also influence the actions of public officials, who, as noted earlier, are sometimes quite active opponents of cultural works. There is a long line of research in political science that demonstrates the close connection between an opinion climate of an electoral district and the behavior and decisions of elected officials (Glazer and Robbins 1985; Page et al. 1983; Wright, Erikson, and McIver 1987). Paul

Schumaker (1999) finds that local officials gauge the local climate of opinion and try to determine the community's values before getting involved in morality issues.

In short, the climate of opinion in a city should influence the likelihood that citizens, parents, and officials speak out against a cultural presentation that they find offensive or harmful. Challenging a cultural work often requires opposing the decisions of professionals and experts—teachers, librarians, curators, public arts advocates, or corporate managers—who represent legitimate and credible institutions in the community (schools, libraries, city government, radio stations, and movie theaters). Thus speaking out against a cultural presentation and challenging established institutions present certain risks to potential opponents. As Joseph Gusfield (1963) has noted, “Yesterday’s moral virtue can be today’s ridiculed fanaticism” (180). In short, the probability that a group or an individual will initiate a conflict over art and culture should be greater where local opinion is more sympathetic to the grievance at hand.

How can we measure the local climate of opinion in our sample of cities? The most straightforward approach would be to aggregate individual opinions about a range of moral and cultural issues in each metropolitan area. Unfortunately, such data do not exist for most of the cities in my sample. Nonetheless, there is precedent for using other indicators to gauge opinion climate, especially the extent to which a city is conservative. A fairly large body of evidence suggests that membership in a doctrinally conservative church has independent effects on moral conservatism (Jelen 1993), individual levels of tolerance (Gibson 1992), and the propensity to join in conservative causes (Lo 1982). Additionally, according to Kenneth Wald, James Button, and Barbara Ann Rienzo (1996), “it has been customary to associate social conservatism in a community with the concentration of Protestant fundamentalism” (1162). In fact, they argue that the presence of a conservative climate of opinion influences the likelihood that a city will pass an anti-gay ordinance, using the density of conservative churches as a proxy for “moral conservatism.” I use a similar measure, creating a composite “conservatism” measure that combines (1) the number of conservative churches per capita, (2) the percentage of residents who are members of a conservative church, and (3) the number of Christian nonprofit organizations per capita. Interestingly, these measures were also highly correlated with the number of residents in a city who complained to the Federal Communications Commission following Janet Jackson’s exposed breast during the Super Bowl halftime show in 2004, which I also include in the index (see methodological appendix for more details).



5.6 Comparing number of protest events by levels of conservative index in cities^a

Note: Mean number of protest events controls for both population size and changes in the foreign-born population, which are two of the strongest predictors of arts conflict. Additionally, the city of Hartford was removed from the analysis because it is an outlier in terms of protest events; the city of Roanoke was removed as an outlier based on conservative index.

^aConservative Index includes the following variables: conservative churches per capita; attendance rates at conservative churches; number of nonprofit Christian organizations; and complaints per capita to the Federal Communications Commission following 2004 Janet Jackson Super Bowl halftime performance.

Figure 5.6 provides evidence that both confirms and disconfirms the above hypothesis. Overall levels of protest (which combines liberal, conservative, and neutral-based grievances) are no greater in more conservative cities than less conservative cities; in fact, the opposite seems true (although the differences are not statistically significant). Even if not linked to overall levels of protest, a “conservative” climate of opinion *should* be linked to conservative protests and should work to suppress more liberal-based protests. This is precisely what we find in our analysis: those cities ranked in the bottom third of the conservative index experience 5.8 conservative-based conflicts, compared to 8.5 for the most conservative cities (those ranked in the top third). When we look at liberal-based grievances the opposite is true; more conservative cities had fewer liberal protests (1.9 versus 3.0).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented consistent evidence that there is a relationship between a city’s political culture and structure and its propensity to

protest art and culture. Arts conflicts are not apart and outside of mainstream political life; rather, like other forms of collective action, these contests are related to the character of a community's civic life—both present and past. In summary I find that arts protests are related to the new political culture (Sharp 2005b; Clark and Inglehart 1998), to past protest activity in a city, to voter turnout, and to a conservative and traditional public opinion climate. Following these findings, I join Robert Sampson and colleagues (2005) in calling attention to the link between protest and more consensual collective action. Sampson and colleagues note that neighborhoods that protest and fight with each other also celebrate and organize together around common solutions. In fact, they suggest that protest itself is a sign of a healthy democracy. They write, "Collective efficacy is best observed under conditions of challenge, reinforcing the idea that resolving conflict is an important part of civic engagement" (677). Most literature on social capital and engagement focuses on how collective action facilitates community solidarity in the process of achieving political outcomes, but even Robert Putnam, the don of the social capital debate, acknowledges the importance of contention in constructing community when he writes, "Whether among gays marching in San Francisco or evangelists praying on the Mall or, in an earlier era, autoworkers downing tools in Flint, the act of collective protest itself creates enduring bonds of solidarity" (in Sampson et al. 2005, 680).

When we read a news article about a person or group complaining about an art exhibit or trying to get a book removed from the library, we should resist either thinking, "How stupid . . . some fanatic is at it again"; or, "Oh no, another example in the ongoing culture war . . . a sign of a fractured America and a disintegrating public square." Instead we should think about Tocqueville and about the long history of Americans leaving their homes in order to shape together, sometimes happily and sometimes with considerable friction, the future of their communities.

This chapter does not fit squarely into existing literatures about contentious politics—it is not primarily about repertoires of contention nor is it about shifting political opportunities or the role and importance of resources for achieving political goals. It is not about framing and mobilizing potential constituents. I do not focus on events or movements. Instead I look at variation in the number of protest events across cities. In most of this book and in much of my analysis, I consider all protest events the same—regardless of repertoires, mechanisms, goals, or political affiliation. But are arts conflicts all the same? Yes and no. All arts conflicts involve actions that challenge the appropriateness of some form of creative expression. All conflicts involve actors who turn their offense into a public claim

to do something. Cultural conflict, as I have defined it, involves contending parties (supporters and opponents of artworks) who have different ideas about the boundaries of permissible expression.

But cultural conflict, like most social phenomena, defies easy generalizations. Some conflicts are more intense than others. Some are disorganized while others involve coordinated action. Some are linked to national movements or national organizations while others are entirely local. Some originate in liberal concerns about how blacks, women, and other minorities are represented in media and art; other protest originates with traditional and conservative members of society. And as we have seen, different actors use different tactics to express their claims. Nonetheless, what this chapter reveals is that much of the variability of cultural conflict can be explained by a city's political climate and structure.

To date scholars have not really dug in to understand the relationships between arts conflicts and other types of political conflicts and how existing theories and descriptions of contentious activity speak to the phenomena of cultural conflict. By taking a broad view and examining variation in conflict across cities, I have shown that arts conflicts are not random acts of offense and acrimony, they are not simply the result of political gamesmanship, and they are not simply the afterglow of an exploded artistic land mine. Rather, arts controversies are connected to important political, social, and cultural features of communities. Having demonstrated that arts controversies are tethered to communities and are important features of democratic life, future research can begin to ask more detailed questions about important differences in processes, mechanisms, and outcomes.

Such conclusions may be discomfiting to civil libertarians who believe that complaints about art and culture are nothing short of ad hominem attacks on the Constitution's most important guarantee—the freedom of speech. Such First Amendment crusaders tend to paint opponents of art as coming from the fringes of society—intolerant and irrational cranks. Such characterizations do not help us understand the social and political basis of cultural conflict, nor do they help us to see how “voice”—no matter how challenging or how cranky—is always better than either violence or silence. Cultural conflict is the result of an active and organized citizenry, it draws upon traditional repertoires of contention, and it serves as a forum for discourse, disagreement, and debate. As Erika Doss writes, “While public art controversy abounds, it is genuinely healthy: It shows the continued vitality of civic engagement . . . and [is] essential to an engaged, democratic culture” (Doss 1995, 34).

Profiles of Contention

According to a 2001 *Wall Street Journal* article, 75 percent of all college graduates that year reported that their choice of where to live was based mainly on the characteristics of the city rather than the availability of a job. Young people recognize that cities have different mixes of amenities, different cultures, different types of residents, and different vibes. Cities are not simply conglomerations of buildings, roads, and jobs. They have very different profiles—some are good places to raise families; others are great places to see theater; still others offer great bike trails and parks. Some cities are environmentally friendly; others are not. Daniel Silver and colleagues (2007) argue, based on a study of amenities, that cities fall roughly into sixteen different profiles of culture, from traditionalist to transgressive, corporate to glamorous, and neighborly to ethnic-based. Richard Florida (2002) argues that cities differ based on their “creativity,” measured by a unique blend of tolerance for alternative lifestyles, investment in technology, and a talented, educated workforce.

The fact that cities have distinctive profiles is not front-page news. Well actually it is. Several groups rank cities across a number of different characteristics, attracting widespread media attention. Nashville, where I live, was recently ranked number one by *Kipling's Personal Finance* magazine in terms of “smart places to live”; Salt Lake City was ranked number one for physical health by *Men's Fitness*; and Charleston, South Carolina, was ranked the friendliest city in America by *Travel and Leisure*.

The notion that cities differ in important cultural ways—not simply in size or population, cost of housing or job market characteristics—is a central premise of this book. In previous chapters, I have argued that one important way in which places differ is the extent to which residents fight over art and culture. Different political cultures and different demographics produce

different levels of conflict. Yet cities vary not only in how much they fight but also in what they fight about and in the intensity of these disputes. The idea that there are distinctive “profiles of contention” is consistent with work by political scientists and sociologists who have attempted to label and classify cities based on the types of issues and the style of politics that come to dominate public life. In chapter 5 I discussed Daniel Elazar’s (1966) notion of individualistic, moralistic, and traditional cities as well as more recent scholarship on conventional and unconventional cities (DeLeon and Naff 2004; Clark and Inglehart 1998; Lieske 2004; Rosdil 1991; Sharp 2005a). In the next three chapters I suggest yet another way to segment and compare cities in terms of their culture and politics. By examining protest over art and culture, many cities can be classified along three dimensions: *cities of cultural regulation*, *cities of contention*, and *cities of recognition*. These categorizations overlap with notions of conventional and unconventional culture and new and old political culture. While these other categories have been used to explain political outcomes (such as the passage of certain types of laws or the openness of government to certain types of claims), my goal in the following three chapters is much more modest. The profiles or categories described and explained in these chapters were derived inductively and are intended to provide readers with a useful lens with which to describe and understand some core differences in how disagreements over art and culture play out in communities. Ultimately, I suggest that understanding local differences is necessary if our goal is to facilitate democratic engagement.

In chapter 2 I discussed several different approaches to considering social change and cultural conflict. One perspective conceptualizes conflict as a type of ritual of protest—a way in which relatively homogenous communities police their boundaries. In this account art serves as a boundary marker. Certain types of books, movies, and songs come to represent the outer limits of permissible expression. When a community declares such objects to be harmful, inappropriate, or obscene, the community is, in effect, denigrating the values and lifestyles of those who enjoy the offending item. When community leaders, activists, newspaper editors, and theater owners declare a film like *Showgirls* to be pornographic and obscene, they are publicly critiquing one set of values—say, sexual permissiveness—while upholding a competing set of values, like sexual restraint, traditional gender roles, and normative family values. In many communities there is significant competition surrounding the boundary of acceptability with different values and lifestyles battling for dominance. In other communities, especially places where there is a great deal of consensus around political,

social, and moral values, conflict may take a more regulatory form. Based on agreed-upon standards, citizens and officials attempt to remove or curtail offending objects. Certainly in small towns and close-knit communities, cultural expression that deviates from the norm is often removed or marginalized while individuals who cut against the grain suffer social sanctions. Protest and conflict serve as ways to maintain harmony and affirm the way things "ought to be" (Durkheim 1973, 1982).

Like many small towns, some larger cities are also characterized by a moral order where residents largely agree on the community's dominant values. Such places tend to be predominately white and experience below average levels of immigration. Their populations are stable or declining. Residents are often described as churchgoing, and the vast majority of people lean to the right politically. In spirit these cities resemble Robert Lynd and Helen Lynd's depiction of Middletown (1937) or Zenith, the hometown of Sinclair Lewis's quintessential middle-American icon George F. Babbitt (1961). Cities like Cincinnati, Dayton, Kansas City, and Oklahoma City are cut from this cloth of moral conservatism, traditionalism, consensus, residential stability, and homogeneity. In terms of their profile of contention, these metropolitan areas can be thought of as cities of cultural regulation.

In Sunbelt cities, generally thought of as fast-growing cities in the South and Southwest, I find that the profile of contention is quite different. In these areas, social change is dramatic and creates significant cracks and rifts in the social order. New groups are fighting for more power to determine community life, while established groups are trying to defend their status and hang on to traditional ways of life. Public institutions like schools, libraries, and museums are sites of active conflict as citizens wrestle with emerging and still unsettled notions of community identity and shared values. Rather than policing agreed-upon boundaries of permissible expression, residents of these communities fight about where to draw the lines and over whose voice and values will define the future direction of their community.

In these cities I am tempted to apply the "culture war" metaphor given that struggles tend to be more entrenched, ideologically charged, and polarizing. Yet unlike the culture wars, which depict conflict as arising from a single epic battle waged largely at the national level between religious orthodoxy and secular humanism, these conflicts typically have a more local flavor. They represent local concerns, reflect local political culture, and are triggered by social change at the local level. In cities like Atlanta, Phoenix, Dallas, Denver, Charlotte, Fort Worth, and Richmond, cultural conflict arises from rapid social change, driven in large measure by the arrival

of new immigrants. These cities are fairly conservative when we look at the number of adherents to fundamentalist churches. They tend to elect conservative and Republican officials. At the same time they have sizable pockets of liberal constituents—gay communities and neighborhoods, new creative class workers, and a large, black middle class. These cities are also more racially and ethnically diverse than the midwestern and Great Plains cities described above, and not surprisingly they have a long history of racial conflict and ethnic protest. In addition, these cities tend to have lively arts scenes and a greater than average number of artists. Given the mix of a fairly conservative and traditional majority with an active and vocal liberal minority, these cities are ripe for conflict. Unlike cities of cultural regulation, where conflicts resemble rituals of protest intended to affirm dominant values, cities of contention are characterized by flairs of competition between competing groups with *both* liberal *and* conservative grievances dominating public discourse.

As discussed in chapter 1, more than 25 percent of all conflicts in our seventy-one-city sample involved liberal-based grievances, most of which are rooted in what sociologists and political scientists refer to as identity politics (Dubin 1992; Gitlin 1995; Schlesinger 1998). In these cases historically disadvantaged groups—women along with ethnic and religious minorities—attack art and entertainment they believe mischaracterizes or misrepresents them. For these groups, protest over art often serves to assert their voice and identity and to articulate and take control of how they are depicted in images that circulate in books, movies, fine art, and music. Several cities in our sample are disproportionately represented by these types of conflicts—San Francisco, Cleveland, San Jose, Albuquerque, and Chicago. Compared to other cities, these cities have higher levels of ethnic diversity and have long ago passed through the type of visible and dramatic social change that characterizes today's Sunbelt cities. They have moved into a phase of robust pluralism, where new and emerging groups tend to dominate the public discussion over art and culture. In these cities conservative-based grievances are outnumbered by liberal-based concerns. Rather than rituals of protest or flairs of competition, these cities experience declarations of recognition. In cities of recognition conflict over art is a means to amplify the voice of historically disadvantaged groups seeking recognition and accommodation in the public square.

Not every case in each of these cities fits into this schema, but I identify several key distinguishing features across all cases. These chapters serve as an attempt to categorize the unique narratives comprising each city's profile of contention. My method is not unlike the process my four-year-old uses

when beginning a new hundred-piece puzzle. He sorts the pieces into those with straight edges, background pieces, and subject pieces, though he does not use these words. This strategy helps him make sense of the puzzle, but of course there are other patterns or categories he could use. The following three chapters are my first attempt to inductively categorize cities based upon my intimate knowledge of the different cases. In the process of categorizing, I considered pages upon pages of statistical reports—each ranks the seventy-one cities analyzed in this project along different dimensions (for example, overall conflicts, liberal conflicts, conservative conflicts, wildfires, unilateral actions, involvement of elected officials, levels of demographic change, indices of conservatism and traditionalism, ethnic makeup, and so forth). Then I looked for patterns and possible groupings. These chapters offer in-depth descriptions as opposed to statistical analysis. In contrast to the bird's-eye view taken in earlier chapters, I feel my way around and through the data in order to offer detailed profiles of the kinds of cultural conflict experienced in a range of American cities. In taking this approach, I want to avoid misplaced concreteness. In other words, these ideal types are not to be used as analytically distinct categories for modeling and analysis; rather, they are heuristics to help readers and scholars think about the dynamics of conflict and to begin to pay closer attention to how cities might differ in critical ways. By grouping cities in terms of certain criteria, I have necessarily overlooked important aspects of their uniqueness. A resident of any of these cities might find that a category fits their city like an untailored suit—not perfectly but acceptably. Like all ideal types, these categories are not exact replicas but recognizable reproductions.

Cities of Cultural Regulation: Cincinnati, Dayton, Kansas City, and Oklahoma City

Governments from Ancient Greece to the modern day, from theocracies to liberal democracies, have regulated culture using a variety of tools—from outright censorship and prohibition to government control over production (requiring licenses and “stamps” in order to produce and disseminate art, books, music), from age restrictions to obscenity laws, zoning, and government-imposed “decency” standards like those of today’s Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Historically, much cultural regulation has taken place at the level of national governments, but since the beginning of the twentieth century, city governments have been particularly active in regulating culture as well, especially public sites of leisure and entertainment—bars, nightclubs, and dance halls (Adams 1994; Lovatt 1996). Cultural regulation is often thought of as any attempt by public authorities to use voluntary means (such as self-ratings) or coercive means (such as obscenity laws) to restrict the production and distribution of cultural expression. In this chapter I diverge from this more formal definition. In designating places like Cincinnati, Dayton, Kansas City, and Oklahoma City as *cities of cultural regulation*, I am not necessarily saying that all, or even most, cases of conflict in these cities involve explicit efforts by city governments to restrict the production and distribution of culture, although these cities do see a disproportionately large number of government-based regulatory efforts. Instead I want to focus on the idea that cultural protest in these cities originates primarily from conservative-based grievances and groups. Cities of cultural regulation tend to be relatively homogenous with low levels of population change. They have a conservative climate of opinion characterized by general agreement about the city’s dominant values. Residents are well aware of this climate of opinion, and elected leaders and activists proceed as if there are agreed-upon standards of decency shared by

most residents. Many protesters evoke the notion of community standards and seem to draw very clear lines between what is acceptable and what is unacceptable and between what they perceive to be local values and those ideas and values that emanate from “outsiders” like professional educators, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the American Library Association among others. Residents and elected leaders in these cities are less involved in divisive ideological clashes than in more routine efforts to protect children from harm or purge their communities of unwanted expression. For this reason many of the conflicts might be described as rituals of protest.

In the Durkheimian tradition (1973, 1982), rituals serve to affirm dominant norms and values. For Durkheim, rituals are stylized patterns of conduct in the presence of sacred objects. These sacred objects (a cross, a crown, a goblet, or special foods) symbolize the ideals of a group; rituals connected to these symbols/objects therefore affirm the values and the moral order of the community. Protests over art and culture can be considered rituals in that they involve individual action (protest) oriented toward symbols (artworks) in an effort to affirm the moral order. In some of our cities, especially those with a long history of anti-pornography crusades, protests over art closely resemble Durkheim’s notion of “stylized patterns of conduct.” Efforts to crack down on obscenity are predictable, involve routine tactics (such as police raids, obscenity charges, petitions), and often engage the same cast of characters from event to event. Yet protests over art also differ from the forms of ritual that Durkheim describes, which are more explicitly oriented toward religion and notions of the sacred. By contrast I use Durkheimian-inspired notions such as cultural regulation and rituals of protest loosely—more as metaphors than as precise analytical terms.

Table 6.1 shows some of the distinctive properties of *cities of cultural regulation* (CCRs). These cities are significantly more racially homogenous than either of the other two city types. Across all four cities, the average racial heterogeneity is 0.29 (83 percent), compared to 0.40 (74 percent white) in *cities of contention* and 0.52 (62 percent white) in *cities of recognition*. CCRs also experience much slower rates of immigration. The change in the percent of foreign-born residents for CCRs is 5 percent compared to 58 percent and 25 percent. In terms of the climate of opinion, cities of cultural regulation are more traditional than other cities (as measured by subscription rates to family- and home-oriented magazines), and CCRs score higher on the conservative index (as measured in part by rates of church attendance and numbers of fundamentalist churches in a city) than cities of recognition (although not as high as cities of contention). Reflecting this climate of opinion, the vast majority of conflicts on average across these four cities

Table 6.1 Comparing cities of cultural regulation (CCR), cities of contention (CC), cities of recognition (CR)

	Total # of protest events	Total # of wild-fires	Total # of conservative-based protests	Total # of liberal-based protests	Racial heterogeneity	Percent Δ in percent foreign born	Artists per capita	Total # of ethnic-related protests	Cosmopolitan values index	Traditional values index	Conservative values index
Cities of cultural regulation											
Oklahoma City	9.00	4.00	8.00	0.00	0.35	0.24	6.82	0.00	5.30	81.90	0.95
Cincinnati	13.00	6.00	10.00	1.00	0.24	-0.03	6.55	1.00	7.60	77.60	-0.05
Kansas City	14.00	5.00	11.00	1.00	0.29	0.02	7.14	1.00	7.00	83.80	0.31
Dayton	11.00	4.00	10.00	0.00	0.26	-0.05	5.71	0.00	5.50	85.60	-0.05
Average	11.75	4.75	9.75	0.50	0.29	0.05	6.56	0.50	6.35	82.23	0.29
Cities of contention											
Denver	18.00	8.00	11.00	5.00	0.36	0.10	8.55	5.00	10.70	77.30	-0.29
Forth Worth	18.00	8.00	14.00	3.00	0.40	0.83	6.89	3.00	5.40	66.70	0.56
Dallas	18.00	9.00	14.00	4.00	0.50	0.96	7.51	2.00	7.90	75.80	0.75
Charlotte	13.00	4.00	9.00	2.00	0.35	0.36	5.55	1.00	7.40	81.00	1.29
Average	16.50	7.25	12.00	3.50	0.40	0.56	7.13	2.75	7.85	75.20	0.58
Cities of recognition											
San Francisco	9.00	4.00	2.00	4.00	0.60	0.27	15.14	3.00	31.90	49.20	-0.88
San Jose	18.00	5.00	6.00	9.00	0.59	0.71	6.63	10.00	15.60	69.10	-0.88
Albuquerque	9.00	3.00	2.00	5.00	0.56	0.23	10.56	1.00	9.10	79.40	-0.45
Cleveland	21.00	6.00	9.00	11.00	0.34	-0.20	6.08	10.00	7.40	75.20	-0.62
Average	14.25	4.50	4.75	7.25	0.52	0.25	9.60	6.00	16.00	68.23	-0.71

Note: See methodological appendix for details about each of the above measures/indices.

(9.75, or 83 percent) involve conservative grievances rooted in concerns about obscenity, homosexuality, and blasphemy. Finally, these cities are not very cosmopolitan (as measured by examining subscriptions to magazines associated with urban lifestyles or by looking at the number of artists per capita in the city).

Cincinnati, Dayton, Oklahoma City, and Kansas City are typical of medium-sized cities in the Midwest and the Great Plains. This region holds a prominent place in popular American imagination. It is Lynd and Lynd's *Middletown* (1937), Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1961), and Dorothy's home sweet home (Baum 1956). It is the America represented in Hallmark greetings cards—sincere, virtuous, and saccharine. Philip Barlow and Becky Cantonwine write, "It's very lack of sophistication and cosmopolitan bustle spare it much temptation and corruption. It is often portrayed as the bastion of values associated with a rural past of austere means, inhabited by people who distinctively value community, practicality, church, family decency, hard labor, and neighborliness" (2004, 13). Political commentator Thomas Frank (2004) has written about the influence of morality and traditional values on midwestern politics, focusing specifically on Kansas and Kansas City. Frank calls Kansas a "burnt-over district of conservatism" and notes that "people in suburban Kansas City vituperate against the sinful cosmopolitan elite of New York and Washington, D.C." (35). Politically, Johnson County (part of the Kansas City metropolitan area) is one of the most intensely conservative counties in the nation. Frank estimates that "registered Republicans outnumbered Democrats here by more than two to one" (49). Johnson County has twenty-one Republicans serving in the state house and only one Democrat (Frank 2004). Finally, Kansas City is headquarters to several conservative religious sects and movements—the Church of the Nazarene, the Unity Movement, and the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints—as well as a powerful Christian radio network.

Like Kansas City, Dayton, Oklahoma City, and Cincinnati are also known for their conservatism and commitment to family values. All three cities have active local anti-vice groups and a history of moral crusades against pornography and obscenity. They are, in the words of one editorial writer, "squeamish on the subject of sex" (*Cincinnati Enquirer* 1996). Cincinnati is perhaps the poster child of CCRs. In 1956 local Cincinnati businessman Charles Keating founded Citizens for Decency through Law and began a crusade against *Playboy* magazine. Cincinnati is the headquarters of the National Coalition Against Pornography and the place where Larry Flynt was convicted of obscenity charges for distributing *Hustler* magazine. Cincinnati is home of Simon Leis, who as a county prosecutor and then sheriff spent

most of the 1970s, '80s, and '90s crusading against obscenity. Local adult bookstores, theater productions like *Oh! Calcutta!* and *Hair*, films like *Last Tango in Paris*, and records by rap artists 2 Live Crew were subjected to Leis's campaigns. In addition, Leis is infamous for charging Dennis Barrie, the director of Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center, with two counts of pandering obscenity for presenting photographer Robert Mapplethorpe's 1990 retrospective *The Perfect Moment*, which included nudity and themes of homoeroticism. Barrie was eventually found innocent of the charges, but only after Cincinnati had emerged in the national spotlight as a "bastion of traditional values" and the "smut free capital of the country" (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997, 47).

The virtuous Midwest and Great Plains, at least as represented by the four cities under investigation here, experienced a disproportionate number of conservative-based grievances.¹ Over the course of four years, thirty-nine protests were initiated by conservative citizens or groups and only two arose from liberal-based groups. In Dayton the most visible campaigns came from several Christian-based organizations including the locally based Christian Family Network and local chapters of the Christian Coalition and American Family Association. Protests were focused on films deemed blasphemous or obscene, like *The Priest* and *Showgirls*, as well as TV shows with homosexual content or nudity, including *Roseanne* and *NYPD Blue*. The most unusual case in Dayton involved the owner of a local Catholic bookstore who, for more than a year, launched an anonymous campaign to vandalize books in local libraries that dealt with the topics of homosexuality or the United Nations. Referred to as the "unipooper" by the local police, his protest typically involved defecating on the reading material and then leaving a note behind that said, ironically, that he was the guardian of decency in the community.

In Oklahoma City several of the nine cases of conflict involved law enforcement officers who conducted local raids to round up allegedly obscene comic books and videos. The city council opposed the scheduled concert of Marilyn Manson. In addition they passed a resolution asking libraries to restrict access to "controversial" books—those containing nudity, profanity, homosexuality, and blasphemy. One book of particular concern was titled *It's Perfectly Normal*, which contains illustrations and descriptions of masturbation. The most intense battle came after police seized copies of the Academy Award-winning film *The Tin Drum* from video stores, libraries, and private homes. The film, about a young boy in Nazi Germany, includes a brief scene in which the boy is portrayed as having sex with a teenage girl.

In Kansas City, students and parents were offended by a high school mural that contained images of evolution. A library director canceled a national traveling exhibit about banned books. A local principal canceled a high school play titled *Dark of the Moon* because of suggestive scenes and the depiction of alcohol, and the superintendent and school board banned the nationally acclaimed book *Annie on My Mind*, about two teenage girls who develop a romantic attachment to each other.

Cincinnati also lived up to its national reputation for cracking down on "obscenity." Police raided a local gay bookstore, confiscated the Italian art film *Salò: Or, the 120 Days of Sodom*, and charged the owners with pandering obscenity. The local county prosecutor pressured the bookstore Barnes and Noble to remove the magazine *Playboy* from plain view, while county commissioners demanded that the local library eliminate the gay newsmagazine *The Advocate*. A local university disavowed an exhibit organized by its art department titled *Immaculate Misconceptions* featuring Catholic artists reflecting on their childhood impressions of Catholicism, and the school board overruled the superintendent of a local school district and ordered Maya Angelou's autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* removed from the reading list of a tenth-grade college preparatory class. The book describes Angelou's trauma of being raped as a child.

In addition to the disproportionate number of conservative-based events (and the virtual absence of liberal-based protests), CCRs share other general characteristics, including (1) the active role of law enforcement officers in efforts to remove films and publications considered obscene, (2) the presence of visible and influential local anti-vice and "pro-family" groups, (3) a strong focus on community standards involving a clear demarcation between outsiders and insiders, (4) a willingness by local officials to quickly remove or condemn offending objects, and (5) a lack of visible and organized opposition in response to attacks on cultural works.

Law Enforcement

In Cincinnati, Sheriff Simon Leis made his reputation for cracking down on pornography, first as county prosecutor (participating in prosecuting several well-known "offenders" including Larry Flynt of *Hustler* and the director of the Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center) and later as sheriff. Leis continued his efforts during the late 1990s, eventually bringing obscenity charges against Barnes and Noble for distributing *Libido: The Journal of Sex and Sensibility*. The case began when an overzealous father sent his eleven-year-old daughter into the bookstore to buy a copy of the magazine, a special issue

featuring erotic photographs. The store clerk sold the girl the magazine, leading the father to contact the local anti-porn group Citizens for Community Values, who in turn contacted Sheriff Leis, who filed charges against the bookstore. The Hamilton County prosecutor decided against prosecuting the case because of the "illegal sting operation" conducted by the girl's father (*Cincinnati Enquirer* 1995). This decision not to prosecute led to a public feud between the crusading Leis and the more cautious county prosecutor. Many residents, local officials, and the editorial board of the newspaper came to Leis's defense, crediting him with ridding the city of obscenity. A local judge was quoted as saying, "I personally think he [Leis] is the reason why our community is such a good family-oriented community" (McWhirter, Curnutte, and Delguzzi 1995). In a letter to the editor, a resident noted that she moved her family to Cincinnati from California to "escape filth of the worst imaginable description" in order to get them "into a healthier environment" (McConnell 1995). And a newspaper editorial writer mentioned Leis's "legitimate attempts to crystallize community standards" and make the city a "zero tolerance" zone for the "pornography culture." Ultimately, Cincinnati's attitude toward Leis might be summed up here: "Thanks to Leis, Cincinnati enjoys a virtual spotlessness from the stain of hard-core books, films, shows and magazines that blots other cities" (*Cincinnati Enquirer* 1995). While Leis was the ringleader in Cincinnati, he was not alone in his efforts. Cincinnati police raided a local "gay shop" and confiscated the 1975 film *Salò: Or, the 120 Days of Sodom* by well-known Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini. The film is an adaptation of a novel by the Marquis de Sade and portrays Fascist brutality in World War II. In spite of protests from well-known celebrities, including Martin Scorsese and Alec Baldwin, the city prosecutor filed criminal charges against the store's owners, who pleaded guilty in return for a reduced charge of attempted pandering. Even the local postal service joined the campaign to keep Cincinnati free of obscenity when a postal clerk refused to mail invitations for a local art opening because they featured artistic renderings of nudes.

Law enforcement officials in Cincinnati were not alone in their efforts to reassert cultural boundaries. In Oklahoma City, after a citizen complained about an allegedly obscene comic book, police raided Planet Comics and confiscated copies of *Verotika*, a comic book that contains sexually explicit images, including a scene in which a high school cheerleader gets abducted and raped. Owners of the bookstore were charged with distributing obscenity, and after pleading guilty to the charges subsequently closed their bookstore. Police vowed not to "stop at Planet Comics" in their search for obscene comic books (Owen 1995b). Residents encouraged by the local

chapter of the Christian Coalition called for a broader crackdown, objecting to comic books that teach witchcraft or “show women having sex with animals” (Owen 1995a). One woman concluded, “These are not even comics. Even Catwoman is sexually oriented.” And in events strikingly similar to those that unfolded in Cincinnati, upon the encouragement of a local decency group, Oklahomans for Children and Families, the city’s attorney general approved a plan allowing local police to raid libraries, video rental stores, and private residences. During the raid officers seized six copies of the award-winning film *The Tin Drum*. In the spirit of the old TV series *Dragnet*, one of the officers told the press, “The boys located and seized without incident a total of six movies. There is still one at-large at this time, but we will endeavor to find the remaining one as soon as possible. No expense will be spared. No stone will be left unturned” (Parker 1997). Such comments may seem extreme especially in light of the fact that the movie, internationally regarded as an artistic triumph, was eventually found not to be obscene by a federal judge. Yet such comments and measures are not extreme within the context of a *city of cultural regulation* where it is expected that police and law enforcement personnel will routinely purge offending work and where “no expense will be spared” to protect decency and community values.

Local Morality Groups

In *Arresting Images*, Steven Dubin writes about Cincinnati’s “tendency to push difficult matters from public view” by “regulating sexual information and conduct” (1992, 183). According to Dubin, accomplishing these goals requires a strong, mutually supportive relationship between “decency groups” and local officials. He writes, “What makes the decisive difference in Cincinnati are seasoned moral crusaders and key government officials who can mobilize against anything that violates their sense of propriety” (183). In Cincinnati moral crusaders are perhaps better seasoned than similar activists in any other American city. Moral crusades have a long history in the city, beginning with the 1934 founding of the Legion of Decency by the archdiocese of Cincinnati to fight for Christian morality in movies. In the 1950s Charles Keating founded one of the nation’s first decency groups, Citizens for Decency through Law, whose mission and intent lives on in the contemporary organization Citizens for Community Values (CCV), founded in 1983. Phil Burress, the executive director of CCV, has led numerous high visibility campaigns since the 1980s. A self-acknowledged reformed porn addict, Burress has taken highly visible, pro-Christian, stances on issues ranging from allegedly obscene museum exhibits to the prosecution of the

hip-hop group 2 Live Crew along with a highly visible attempt to repeal a citywide ordinance that prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Burress's group, which *U.S. News and World Report* describes as one of the "largest local grassroots organization of its type in the nation" (Citizens for Community Values 2010), was involved early on in the case against Barnes and Noble for selling the magazine *Libido*. In fact, the case spurred the group to launch a widespread effort to pressure local businesses into removing a range of magazines with objectionable content—including *People*, *Glamour*, *Playboy*, fashion publications, and teen comics. Responding to CCV's magazine campaign, the general manager of the Borders bookstore was quoted in the local paper pointing out that she takes great care in limiting access to potentially inappropriate material. At the same time she emphasized that standards are, in a word, local: "We are very much aware that we are operating in Cincinnati and all that entails" (MacDonald 1995).

Finally, Burress's group teamed up with local chapters of the American Family Association and the Christian Coalition in an effort to get the county library board to remove the gay newsmagazine *The Advocate* from their shelves. The issue that provoked initial scrutiny featured a cover depicting genitalia alongside an image of the crucified Christ. Even though the library board eventually voted to keep the magazine on its shelves, CCV and allies were successful at prompting county commissioners to pass a resolution urging the library to remove the magazine and at holding a public hearing that attracted three hundred community members and resulted in a front-page headline—"Gay Magazine Panned at Forum" (Jennings 1995). CCV's efforts, along with notable obscenity prosecutions, has created an atmosphere where citizens and local proprietors understand and respect the "climate of opinion" and perceive decency campaigns as simply the "way things are."

Similar to Cincinnati, in Oklahoma City the local chapter of the Christian Coalition encouraged its members to purchase "obscene" magazines and comic books in order to determine which stores were distributing inappropriate material to children. Oklahoma City had its own homegrown decency group, Oklahomans for Families and Children (OFAC), led by the outspoken Bob Anderson. OFAC began exerting pressure on the metropolitan library system in 1996 to restrict access to books with sexual content, focusing especially on a book about masturbation called *It's Perfectly Normal*. The group pressured the city council to pass a resolution that called for restrictions on "inappropriate" books (Maggio 1997). In addition the OFAC was the first to check out *The Tin Drum*, which it handed over to the police.

Soon afterward the organization encouraged the subsequent police raid and then pressured the district attorney to pursue an obscenity suit. Finally, Bob Anderson and his group circulated a petition to stop a concert by Marilyn Manson, who they felt promoted rape, disobedience, and satanic worship. The petition resulted in a city council resolution asking for the cancellation of a forthcoming Manson concert.

In Dayton the most important source of conflict came from several conservative Christian organizations, including the locally based Christian Family Network and the Christian Life Coalition as well as the local chapter of the American Family Association. These groups organized a boycott of local theaters in response to the film *The Priest*. They also led demonstrations, phone campaigns, and boycotts aimed at pressuring local businesses to stop advertising during TV shows considered too violent, sexually explicit, or vulgar. In addition the coalition of organizations focused its efforts to get MTV dropped from basic cable subscriptions, citing the sexually suggestive nature of many of the most popular music videos. Like other cities of cultural regulation, Dayton had its own local decency group, the Clark County Citizens Against Pornography, who most notably had the film *Showgirls* successfully pulled from a local theater. In CCRs, conflict over culture is forged through local organizations that are uniquely positioned to engage in grassroots monitoring. Rather than protest coming from outside, conflicts are thoroughly local occurrences that unfold through local connections.

Community Standards and Local Control

One common feature across CCRs is a taken-for-granted notion of community standards. Activists and government officials condemn, remove, or restrict artworks in the name of community standards, often referencing “what most people believe” or how their city holds “particular values and ideas” about what is appropriate for children or the larger community. In Oklahoma City the assistant district attorney noted that the case against the comic book *Verotika* “will give citizens of Oklahoma County the opportunity to decide the community standards of what is obscene for comic books” (Godfrey 1995). A distinction between the views of national elites and the views of the local community was made by a mother who successfully incited the district to remove the book *Out of Control* from the middle school library because it contained thirty swear words. She noted that she was bothered that “people at the national level could write good reviews of the book” and greeted the decision to remove the book from the school as

an indication of the city's community standards. Elaborating on the differences between Oklahoma and other American cities, the mother remarked, "Obviously *our standards* are a bit higher here or something. Oklahoma is the Bible Belt. It was apparent after the [Oklahoma City] bombing that people here are stronger in their faith and a little more sensitive. . . . So the words used in that book aren't something *we want here*" (my emphasis) (Brus 1995). Similarly, the mayor of the Village, a municipality within the Oklahoma City metropolitan area, responded to controversy over the library book *It's Perfectly Normal* by positing his community's standards against those of national library elites. The mayor publicly declared, "I call it [*It's Perfectly Normal*] an indecent book, and the American Library Association calls it a decent book. It's a matter of opinion in what is decent and what is not decent. My opinions, and the opinions of this community, are based on God's standards and not human standards" (Watson and Money 1997). Bob Anderson, the leader of the local decency group, echoed the mayor's comments in a local editorial: "It is now time for the metropolitan library system commissioners to quit obediently following the myths of the ALA [American Library Association] and to truly represent the citizens of Oklahoma County." Referring to *The Tin Drum* case, Anderson again emphasized the importance of local standards, remarking, "Library policies should be changed to reflect the values of the citizens of Oklahoma County" (Money 1997). The assumption that there are agreed-upon local standards that are different from national standards is echoed by the newspaper editorial board: "The policy preferences of the ALA are simply not representative of most Oklahomans, particularly in matters of morality and common sense protections for children" (*Daily Oklahoman* 1998). During the same controversy a resident implored the city council to call on the library commission to remove or restrict controversial books in order to "get things back to the way they should be" (Watson 1997). Such a statement implies a presumably "shared" sense of what the community was like before the contamination of books in the library by outsiders.

In Cincinnati, citizens and officials time and again refer proudly to the city's reputation for being tough on pornography. One opinion editorial writer noted that "*most residents of Greater Cincinnati are a lot like me . . . glad there's not a lot of sleazy porn*" (my emphasis) (Purdy 1995). The local newspaper editorial board publicly extolled the city's "zero tolerance for pornography culture" and backed the efforts of the local sheriff to bring charges against Barnes and Noble because prosecuting the store would help "crystallize community standards." If there were any doubt about the paper's

position, an editorial clarified: "While some see such standards as outdated and censorious, Leis [the sheriff] sees them as crucial to 'keeping Hamilton County a nice place to live'" (*Cincinnati Enquirer* 1995). In a different case, when the local prosecutor faced a lawsuit from *Playboy* for attempting to have the magazine relocated at a local Barnes and Noble, the prosecutor responded, "This is not a First Amendment case; this is about our kids. If a bunch of lawyers from New York want to come to Cincinnati and tell us what our kids can and can't read . . . well, I guess we'll find out" (Kaufman and McWhirter, 1995). Echoing these sentiments, one activists involved in trying to get MTV removed from the basic cable subscription wrote in a letter to the editor, "This is precisely why we have always used the terms 'social standards' or 'community values.' It's time to let the cat out of the bag—the community values of Anderson Township are values of morality—morality founded in Judeo-Christian theology" (Scheper 1995).

In Kansas City a school board member defended her vote to remove the book *Annie on My Mind* from the school library because its portrayal of homosexuality was "contrary to the moral standards of the community" (Saylor 1995). Throughout the controversy the school district where the book was removed defended its position by saying it was trying to reflect community values. In the *Annie* case, local control over the content of books in the library was of central concern. Citizens and school board members depicted the "gay agenda" and gay activist organizations as the proverbial barbarians at the gate. One protester remarked, "The values in these books shouldn't be in our schools." Another noted that "if these books are accepted, it won't be long before more are soon to follow that are more graphic. Students will try to experiment who would otherwise not have if these books were not available in their school libraries" (Ebnet 1995). Similarly, another parent remarked, "I know a girl who read the book and afterward questioned her sexuality. I don't want that for my daughter," noting that the community would be better off to follow "the moral guidelines set by God" (Ebnet 1995). In Dayton, after the Clark County Citizens Against Pornography contacted the county sheriff about the screening of the film *Showgirls*, the sheriff in turn called the president of the local theater chain to tell him that "this [Dayton] is a wholesome community. The people from our community who did view the movie feel that it's harmful and that it does not meet our community standards" (*Springfield News Sun* 1995). While notions of community lie at the heart of many of the conflicts in each of the seventy-one cities I consider, in cities of cultural regulation community standards are invoked more regularly and with a sense that the "standards" are clear, crystallized, and shared by a majority of residents.

Responsiveness of Local Officials

Political scientists who have written about morality issues including abortion, gay rights, needle exchange, and pornography focus on the factors that lead some city governments to take aggressive stances on these issues while leaving others to remain uninvolved or unresponsive to citizen demands to “do something” (Sharp 1999). One important factor is whether or not a city is unconventional or conventional. While unconventional cities have large, robust countercultures that challenge traditional societal values, conventional cities, much like cities of cultural regulation, are more inclined to defend the status quo. Comparing them with unconventional cities, Sharp writes, “Conversely, in conventional cities, we would expect official action to be consistent with traditional values and supportive of the conservative, family values agenda promoted by conventional, conservative forces” (1999, 14). With very few exceptions, city officials and responsible public administrators regularly took action or made public statements in support of efforts to restrict or remove offending books, films, music, and fine artworks. In Cincinnati Angelou’s autobiography was banned from a tenth-grade reading list after a single complaint, and an exhibit was disavowed by a local university (willing to overlook academic freedom) after complaints from local religious leaders that the title of the exhibit *Immaculate Misconceptions* was offensive to Catholics. Responding to citizen complaints, the county commissioners sent a letter to the library board asking them to remove a gay newsmagazine. In Dayton a local theater pulled the film *Showgirls* after receiving a few dozen complaints and a call from the local sheriff; the YMCA removed art that several patrons considered too violent; and the county clerk’s office removed two paintings—one featuring a yin-yang symbol, familiar in eastern religions, and another including a “cow’s skull”—from an exhibition. Both paintings were considered satanic by a handful of employees and patrons of the building. In Kansas City school board members voted to remove *Annie on My Mind* from the library; the district attorney immediately confiscated a Jock Sturges book from Barnes and Noble following several complaints from residents; and a high school principal canceled all theater productions with sexual themes and references to alcohol.

In Oklahoma City the city council passed resolutions seeking the restriction of books with sexual themes. They also passed resolutions seeking the cancellation of a Marilyn Manson concert. A school district agreed to remove the book *Out of Control* from a middle school library after a parent complained about profanity, and as discussed above, the district attorney and local law enforcement heeded pressure from a local obscenity group

and confiscated comic books in one case and an award-winning film in another. At the request of a single visitor, the general manager of the state fair demanded that twelve photographic nudes—described by the newspaper as “not particularly offensive” (Aiken 1995)—be removed from an international photo exhibit. In most cases, across each city of cultural regulation, officials, administrators, and managers chose a course of action targeted at removing offending artworks. The few exceptions tended to deal with challenges to library materials—where libraries and library commissioners are steeped in a national professional culture that is ideologically committed to open access and free expression. Yet even in these cases public officials—including council members, state legislators, mayors, and county prosecutors—responded to public pressure by trying, often unsuccessfully, to get libraries to remove and restrict materials. In cities of cultural regulation, the general approach to offensive material is to purge before ponder, eliminate before evaluate, and restrict before review. The tendency in these cities is to push difficult matters from public view (Dubin 1992).

No Defense

CCRs are noteworthy for the general lack of organized and community-based opposition to attacks on artworks. Few people are willing to speak out or challenge assertions that certain material violates community standards. There are a few exceptions to this general rule. High school students tend to protest efforts to place restrictions on their access to books and materials in school. In several cases students—not parents, local activist groups, artist groups, or civic leaders—were the only voices of resistance. Other than students, civil liberty professionals as well as one or two parents backed by the ACLU have opposed efforts to restrict artworks by filing lawsuits—as in the case of *The Tin Drum*, *Playboy*, and *Annie on My Mind*. When a school district in Oklahoma City removed books from a middle school library, the only protest came from the project director of the local chapter of the ACLU’s First Amendment Project. Other than a professional activist, whose job it was to challenge restrictions on free speech, no other citizen or citizen’s group came to the defense of the school library or spoke in favor of the book publicly. When a comic book was seized from Planet Comics in Oklahoma City, leading to the prosecution of the store’s owners and its eventual closure, there was no protest. No one publicly defended the store or its owners in spite of the fact that the store had a “steady customer base” who were apparently “sad or mad” about the sequence of events. In the end materials were seized, a plea agreement was reached, and the store went out of

business. The community was protected from obscenity without any protest or push back against the authorities. While a local ACLU worker filed a lawsuit against the city in response to raids motivated by the distribution of the film *The Tin Drum*, and national organizations came to his defense ridiculing the city for its censorious actions, no local group spoke out against the city's actions. By the end of the controversy, a group called Citizens Supporting Open Libraries was created (at the instigation of the library director), but the group seemed largely symbolic and was never mentioned again in the press, nor did it show any signs of organized activity.

In Cincinnati, after police raided a local gay bookstore and seized a well-known European film, dozens of national organizations came to the film's defense, but as was the case in other CCRs, no local organizations intervened besides the local ACLU chapter. No gay rights group spoke out, business leaders and video store owners did not come to the shop's defense, and leaders of local cultural organizations were largely silent. Similarly, when attacks were waged on Barnes and Noble for carrying the erotic magazine *Libido*, there was no outcry from the gay community or from local rights organizations. When Northern Kentucky University disavowed the exhibit *Immaculate Misconceptions*, the organizing artist canceled the show, but faculty and community artists did not come together to support the artist or put pressure on the university to change its position. In Oklahoma City, when the city council passed a resolution in favor of banning Marilyn Manson, dozens of anti-Manson protesters attended the meeting but only *one* person "nervously stood before the council to defend the band's music," telling the councilors that she felt "very unpopular" for publicly supporting the music and the band (Lackmeyer 1997). In Kansas City, school board members and local activists were outspoken about their disapproval of gay-themed books in the library, arguing that these materials have detrimental effects on the community. More than three hundred parents packed a school auditorium to demand that the books be removed. Only a lone science teacher defended the books and joined with the ACLU to sue the school district. Few others spoke out besides the author of one of the books, *Annie on My Mind*, who came to town during the trial to talk about the positive lessons of the book's story. An editor of the local paper noted that the ACLU's victory (a federal judge ordered the book returned to the shelves) was "dampened by the high volume of disturbing comments, by both public officials and more than a few regular folks." The editor continued, "What was equally alarming was the lack of outrage over what the board members said about their reasons for wanting the book banned." Responses to the school board's anti-gay comments and censorious actions were "overwhelmingly supportive"

(Saylor 1995). Cities of cultural regulation are not entirely without oppositional voices, but such voices are less organized and, more often than not, outnumbered considerably. The dominant ethos is that there are agreed-upon "standards" that need defending, with few people willing to stand up to articulate a different set of standards or to push back against the dominant values of the community.

Perhaps not surprisingly, CCRs employ symbolic acts of purging as a component in their "rituals of protest." In Dayton the Spirit of Life Christian Church, under the direction of Father Donovan A. Larkin, set blaze to everything from occult materials to a Braille issue of *Playboy* magazine along with books containing homosexual themes. In 1995 the fifth annual protest took place in front of the metropolitan library, where the group demanded the removal of two gay-themed books, *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Daddy's Roommate*. Larkin noted that the book burners were trying to "rid themselves of the tools of Satan" (Wallach 1994). In Kansas City a minister checked out a copy of the book *The New Joy of Gay Sex* and burned it on the steps of the library, and a local group burned copies of *Annie on My Mind* in front of a district school building. Finally, a group of residents in Kansas City went to several Barnes and Noble stores and demanded the removal of Sturges's *Radiant Identity* because the book features pictures of nude children. One of the protesters took the books off the shelf and proceeded to rip out offending pages.

Burning and destroying books stand out as extreme forms of cultural regulation across my sample of cities, but in cities of cultural regulation, purging belongs to a larger class of events whereby citizens and officials attempt to banish items that fall outside of the range of acceptable expression. In these cities protesters' arguments make reference to the large gap between the values and standards of the "national, liberal elite" and local residents. In many cases local decency groups stand ready to wave the banner of "community standards" and in doing so rally the troops to put pressure on local officials to do something to protect residents and their children. By employing visible forms of protest like purging and by positioning complaints in terms of local values, the identity of CCRs is reaffirmed through conflict around culture.

Elected officials, law enforcement officers, managers, and administrators tend to be extraordinarily receptive to demands from offended groups, often removing artworks after just a few complaints. When elected officials lack the authority to remove a book or cultural presentation (for example, when the complaint falls under the jurisdiction of the schools or libraries), they will often resort to passing a nonbinding ordinance calling for the removal

or restriction of books, films, exhibits, or concerts. There are pockets of defenders who push back against the impulse to purge and restrict art and culture, but these defenders tend to be professional librarians or representatives of the ACLU rather than activists emerging from local communities. While high school students sometimes stage visible protests against attempts to restrict their access to books and films, most opposition comes in the form of legal maneuvers, often initiated by the ACLU and involving very few local residents. Such legal proceedings, while long and drawn out, actually serve to drain the heat and energy from a dispute—leaving the battle to lawyers and judges in the courtroom rather than activists and citizens in town hall, at school board meetings, and in the streets. While conflict over culture is part and parcel to American life, cities of cultural regulation are involved in ongoing efforts to maintain and regulate the culture and values of the community through public protest over art and culture. CCRs employ unique strategies and engage in protest for reasons that stand in marked contrast to both *contentious cities* and *cities of recognition*.

Cities of Contention: Dallas, Fort Worth, Charlotte, and Denver

"Today is the first anniversary of one of the biggest earthquakes in Charlotte history. It opened fault lines between conservative Christians and gays, suburban homeowners and uptown executives, people who cling to traditional values and those who would redefine them. Charlotte is a New South city with a fault line running down Main Street" (Brown 1996a). The controversy that unfolded in Charlotte, North Carolina, over the play *Angels in America* raised stark images of earthquakes and fault lines—images that are largely absent from the coverage of conflicts in *cities of cultural regulation* (CCR). In regulating conflicts in Kansas City, Cincinnati, Dayton, and Oklahoma City, residents and city officials rallied around the flag of traditional values. By contrast, in *cities of contention* (CCs) opponents took hold of one corner of the proverbial flag and pulled in opposite directions. Contentious cities—like Atlanta (discussed in chapter 4), Charlotte, Phoenix, Dallas, and Fort Worth—resemble the battlegrounds of James Davison Hunter's culture wars with a disproportionate number of cases involving ideological disputes between, on the one hand, fundamentalism and orthodoxy, and, on the other, cosmopolitanism and secularism. These disputes often involved organized groups of activists on each side, harsh rhetoric, name-calling, strong emotions, visible protest, and electoral politics. Conflicts in *cities of contention* are more likely to polarize communities and reveal fault lines and deep division.

Throughout much of this book I have attempted to provide a more nuanced view of the culture wars by suggesting that arts conflicts are often less ideological, less structured by elite actors, and more rooted in the context of local communities rather than simply reflecting the political and cultural battles being fought at the national level. While many of the protest events described in this section share properties of Hunter's culture wars, the entire

mix of controversies is more complicated than Hunter's imagery suggests. Some conflicts are motivated less by religious concerns and more by issues emerging from identity politics. Some are resolved quickly with little ideological posturing, and some are primarily triggered and organized by everyday citizens and parents rather than professionalized activist organizations. In short, the form and content of the various protest events does not perfectly resemble Hunter's war metaphor. Nonetheless, there is a strong echo of the culture wars reverberating in these cities. In each, residents and elected officials disagree over the character and values of their communities, and they stand up, speak out, and push back in an effort to reassert ideas about permissible and impermissible expression.

I refer to these cities as contentious because of the frequency of protest over art and culture and because of the quality and character of those protests. In terms of frequency, Charlotte, Denver, Dallas, and Fort Worth averaged close to 50 percent more conflicts over four years than the cities discussed in chapter 6 (see table 6.1). Cities of contention also experienced robust increases in the number of new foreign-born residents between 1980 and 1990—a 56.3 percent increase in CCs versus 5.0 percent in CCRs. In addition, CCs are more racially diverse than cities in the middle of the country, with nonwhite populations nearing 25 percent and a racial heterogeneity index of 0.4. The nature of religious commitments and ideology are also different among the South and Sunbelt regions and the middle regions of the country. As noted above, the Midwest and Great Plains states are highly religious and conservative, but conservatism is rooted in tradition, family, and small-town values; it is a polite and buttoned-up conservatism. Heading south toward the Sunbelt, the nature of "conservatism" changes.¹ Residents are more likely to be fundamentalist, evangelical, expressive, ideological, and confrontational. The South stands out for the size of its white evangelical population, almost twice the national average (Wilson and Silk 2005). This conservatism is displayed in table 6.1 (see chapter 6), with cities of contention ranking highest on the conservative index. By contrast, cities of cultural regulation rank slightly higher on the traditional index, perhaps reflecting the different versions of conservatism between the two regions. Within this conservative climate, diverse groups—new immigrants, ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians, and worldly professionals—are ever-expanding in CCs. Compared to the cities described in chapter 6, cities of contention have more artists per capita and are more cosmopolitan (as measured by the reading habits of residents).

James Coleman (1957) suggests that when a conflict erupts in a community, say, over a book in the school library, the community will (1) unite

together against the offense, (2) divide into opposing camps, or (3) unite together to defend the challenged book. The first two strategies map on to the responses often seen in cities of cultural regulation and cities of contention, respectively. In the "opposing camps" case, Coleman suggests that conflict results from "*existing hostility* between two groups in the community" (my emphasis) (6). In other words, cultural conflicts are often lightning rods for the expression of deep-seated and persistent tensions.

Rather than rituals of protest, cities of contention feature flairs of competition that are spurred by existing group differences. Groups in a community—new immigrants, relocated professionals, ethnic groups, established elites, old timers, and newcomers—are locked in competition over the future direction of their cities. Such groups often hold incompatible views about education, popular culture, the role of the arts, urban design, and the image of their communities. In such a climate the assertiveness and visibility of one group will generate antagonistic feelings in competing groups—leading to heightened sensitivity and tension below the surface of community life and sometimes to more explicit reaction and protest. Sociologists have begun to recognize that protest and political mobilization is often less about "challengers" who make claims on the government or the state and more about the underlying dynamics between competing groups (Miceli 2005). The struggle between gay rights activists and the Christian right is a good example of the push and pull of opposing parties. These groups are "perfect enemies," propelling each other forward with heated rhetoric and competing claims to the moral high ground (Gallagher and Bull 1996). In cities of contention, protest emerges from the tensions between opposing groups, and specific cases can be traced to prolonged or emerging conflict between adversaries.

Sunbelt cities like Atlanta, Fort Worth, Dallas, Charlotte, and Denver are perfect combustible cocktails of rapid population change, ethnic diversity, strong and politically organized African American communities, transplanted professionals, gentrifying neighborhoods, and arts districts. To intensify matters, these changes are taking place against a backdrop of Christian conservatism and evangelical zeal. For example, the Fort Worth–Dallas region is a hotbed of religious broadcasting networks and evangelical ministries. In 1980 Dallas hosted the infamous meeting of the Religious Roundtable, a key event in the emergence of the New Religious Right. CCs are also home to a disproportionate number of mega-churches—large, evangelical Christian worship centers that have become increasingly influential in local and national elections and shaping national opinions about a range of social issues. Dallas is not the only city of contention in which conservative

Christian organizations and national ministries feature prominently. Less than sixty miles from Denver, an exemplary CC is the headquarters of Focus on the Family—one of the largest, national religious-right organizations in America. James Baker’s infamous televangelist ministry was located in Charlotte, and Kenneth Copeland Ministries, a multimillion-dollar operation with five hundred employees and many affiliated media companies, is located in Dallas.

Liberal and progressive groups and causes emerge within the intensely religious backdrop of the Sunbelt region. As noted in chapter 4, Atlanta is home to an active gay community as well as a sizable and growing black middle class. Denver has a history of progressive city politics—opening the first birth control clinic in Colorado in 1926, approving one of the first city ordinances to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and electing both a Hispanic and black mayor in the 1990s. In Dallas gays and lesbians have ascended to important political positions in the State House, in law enforcement, and on the city council and school board. Dallas is home of the Cathedral of Hope, the world’s largest gay and lesbian church, located in the Oaklawn neighborhood on Cedar Springs, an avenue of gay bars and LGBT-owned businesses brandishing pink triangles and rainbow flags. To celebrate the first National Coming Out Day in 1988, 450 gay and lesbian residents took out a full-page ad in the *Dallas Morning News* listing their own names. In an even more conspicuous display, gay activists in Atlanta protested Georgia’s sodomy laws by placing “gay” inflatable dolls in compromising positions on the grounds of the State House. In addition to the political achievements of minorities and women and the visible presence of gay communities, Sunbelt cities are also known for their “urban avant-garde with advanced technology, postindustrial economic progress, and amenities” (Monkkonen 1988, 235). This is the New South, anchored by technology parks, world-class art museums and symphonies, artist and immigrant communities, gentrified neighborhoods, and business elites who work hard to promote their cities as progressive, creative, and tolerant places in which to live, work, or visit.

“Aspirational” Sunbelt cities of the New South, like American boomtowns of the early twentieth century, are “protean . . . being constantly redefined by newcomers” (Gattis 2006). It is this juxtaposition of the old and the new that is so jarring for longtime residents. Journalist Jim Cobb has noted that a visitor can purchase cracklins (fried pork skin) and caviar within two blocks in Atlanta (Goldfield 1997, 321). Syndicated columnist Garry Wills described the New South as a “particularly bilious compound of the new and the old, of space programs and retirement villas, honky-tonks

and superconservatism" (in Schulman 1993, 341). Southern culture persists amid the new skyscrapers and business parks. Residents retain their southern identity by sporting cowboy boots, driving pickup trucks and listening to country music, and by simultaneously subscribing to a distinct set of political attitudes that resent "government interference, bureaucrats, pointy-headed intellectuals, and 'welfare Cadillacs'" (Schulman 1993, 345). This "bilious compound" has made the South a flashpoint region producing political and religious clashes of pronounced intensity. These clashes, some argue, are even sharper in the "crossroads" region of the South, where the frontier mentality of places like Texas mix with old South ideals resulting in an evangelical zeal to "conquer culture for Christ" and reclaim America against godless secularism and worldliness (Wilson and Silk 2005, 29). Art, entertainment, and education have been caught at the intersection of the "crossroads."

This notion of reclaiming American culture is evident across each city of contention. The vast majority of conflicts in CCs were over art and cultural expression that was deemed pornographic, obscene, harmful to children, violent, or blasphemous (see table 6.1). In Denver religious fundamentalists protested a Halloween night special event at a local Barnes and Noble featuring books about "pagan witches" (Kisling 1995). The store canceled the event as a result of the protest. In a local high school a student from a fundamentalist Christian background objected to a documentary shown in biology class, which included a brief portrayal of evolution as fact rather than theory. The Denver school board removed the film from the curriculum only to reinstate it after vociferous protest from community members. Parents and Christian groups also went after R-rated films shown to high school students, including *Schindler's List* and Bernardo Bertolucci's film *1900*, as well as school and library books that contain profanity, including *My Brother Sam Is Dead* and *Grendel*. Finally, a Colorado state legislator tried, unsuccessfully, to pass a state law that would ban the sale and/or exhibition of lascivious art. The legislation was motivated by the lawmaker's objections to books of photography by Sally Mann and Jock Sturges that feature photographic nudes of children.

In Dallas citizens and parents fought to have books and magazines removed from the schools and public libraries that featured rebellious children (*The Egypt Game*), gay themes (*Out* magazine), and sexual situations (romance novels). School board trustees wanted to adopt a controversial science textbook that promoted intelligent design and creationism. The local public library refused to display a scheduled exhibit that featured a nude painting. Similarly, in Fort Worth parents objected to the book *David*

and *Jonathan* because of allusions to masturbation. In addition, they complained about the World War II novel *The Last Mission* because it contained profanity and Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* because it included references to rape and described "a life of immorality" (Berard 1995c, 1995a). A parent even complained about a statue of a school mascot, a male elk, because it was too anatomically correct. The mother argued that the elk caused embarrassment to herself, her daughter, and other female students. Church officials and citizens launched a highly visible protest against a public sculpture, *Caelum Moor*, which featured an assembly of granite rocks that some critics claimed were satanic and lured pagan worshippers to the city.

In Charlotte church leaders and religiously based activists launched a highly visible campaign against the local production of Tony Kushner's award-winning play *Angels in America*, objecting to the play because it featured frontal nudity and themes of homosexuality. Charlotte citizens and elected leaders also sparred over a film festival that was said to include a "disproportionate" number of gay and lesbian films and a library book titled *The Faber Book of Gay Short Fiction*. The difference between these cities and CCRs is not over the kind of culture that animates conflict. Rather, in cities of contention a mobilized segment of the population is willing to stand up and defend these films, books, and artistic renderings as valuable and worthy of support. For some groups the culture that motivates conflict is a valued component of American life.

Unlike cities of cultural regulation, Dallas, Fort Worth, Denver, and Charlotte also featured a fair number of conflicts originating over more liberal or progressive concerns, including issues relating to race and ethnic relations. In Charlotte an African American minister criticized the local YMCA because of a white-skinned Jesus that hung on its walls. The minister wanted a portrait that more accurately depicted Jesus' Middle Eastern background. Similarly, a Charlotte animal rights activist protested an art exhibit that featured a freeze-dried kitten. In Fort Worth African American religious leaders disapproved of a school textbook containing an offensive quote from a nineteenth-century minister claiming the Bible condoned slavery. Activists also objected to a museum exhibit that "misrepresented" the horrors of slavery. In Dallas parents and community leaders protested a schoolbook called *African Folktales: Traditional Stories of the Black World* because it contained negative stereotypes of blacks. They also complained about a school superintendent's decision to suspend a school-related public access cable channel used by students in a predominantly black school because of a questionable television show titled *Understanding Gays*. In response the

NAACP claimed that denying the students access to the cable station was a violation of desegregation laws. Also in the Dallas school system, a student and her parents challenged a school assignment that required her to read the Bible on the grounds of religious freedom.

In Denver several concerns originated from Latino and Native American communities. In one example several Native American tribes asked officials to change a Civil War memorial that celebrates the Battle of Sand Creek in which more than two hundred Native Americans were massacred. A local radio station owner led a demonstration over a painting in a gallery that depicted Mexican war hero Emiliano Zapata dressed in a white mini-skirt and holding a straw book and a box of laundry detergent. In addition, ethnic concerns surfaced in a debate over a sculpture commissioned for the Colorado state capitol designed to honor fallen firefighters. The artist, who was of Latino descent, created a design that featured several Latino firefighters helping a white victim. When the government asked the artist to make the figures more ethnically “neutral,” a storm of criticism and protest erupted from the artist, local citizens, and an association of black and Latino firefighters.

To summarize, cities of contention are characterized by rapid social change against a backdrop of traditional values. In many instances of conflict, citizens, feeling embattled and assaulted by a national culture that seems out of step with their conservative beliefs, launched protests against art and entertainment that they felt was obscene, blasphemous, and a threat to their communities and families. Yet these cities, unlike cities of cultural regulation, are more racially and ethnically diverse and have more transplanted residents with differing values and lifestyles. Thus, emerging alongside conservative complaints are a fair number of liberal-based grievances, often revolving around books, monuments, or films that offend racial and ethnic minorities.

Cities of contention have other distinctive qualities as well. First, as noted above, protests often take the form of oppositional movements. In cities of cultural regulation it is hard to find groups willing to take a stand and defend artworks that are attacked. This is decidedly not true in cities of contention. Second, in cities of contention, commentators, columnists, reporters, elected officials, and participants are more likely to characterize and frame conflicts using “culture war” rhetoric, emphasizing divisions—lines in the sand, battles, deep rifts, and fault lines. Third and related, in CCs fiery rhetoric emerges as participants show a willingness to denigrate and belittle the opposing side. Fourth, participants and reporters often link specific protests or complaints to larger issues in the community—whether

over race, electoral politics, education policy, or the larger “culture wars.” Arts conflicts are frequently part of deep-seated tensions and cultural and social dynamics within a city. Fifth, many conflicts explicitly raise issues regarding a city’s image—its national reputation and trajectory. Citizens and commentators often seem aware that their communities face a “critical moment” and that their future is on the line. Finally, public “showdowns” define several of the cases across these four cities. At some point in the unfolding conflict, both sides show up at a public meeting for a face-off, where dozens if not hundreds of citizens attend and many make impassioned speeches. Tempers get hot, and tongues get loose.

Strength and Visibility of Opposition

In cities of contention, few challenges go unchallenged. In the absence of broad agreement over community standards, residents speak out and resist what they perceive to be the imposition of one set of values (often conservative and traditional) on the rest of the community. Often the resistance begins with the “presenters” themselves, as when the director of the Charlotte Repertory Theatre refused to change the production of *Angels in America* to address concerns about nudity. In an interview with the local newspaper, the director remarked, “It [the play] will go on as written. Nothing has changed. If there is an arrest [based on public indecency laws], this could become the Constitutional challenge the law needs. We will not censor ourselves or harm the integrity of the play.” One of the actors in the production declared that he was “willing to go to jail” rather than see the play changed or canceled. Pro-*Angels* supporters organized pickets to counter the anti-*Angels* supporters, both of whom marched in front of the theater before and during the production. The *Charlotte Observer* published several editorials that strongly supported the theater and the play. In addition, local directors and board members of a diverse set of cultural institutions spoke out in favor of the production along with ministers and pastors of progressive churches and the CEOs of several large Charlotte businesses, including Duke Power and notable Charlotte-based banks. In addition, the gay and lesbian community took a visible and public stand, organizing protests by the Lesbian Avengers, N.C. Pride Action Committee, and the Gay and Lesbian Employee Association. Affirming the notion that oppositional groups feed off one another, participants in the *Angels* controversy justified their involvement based on the actions of the “other side.” Leaders in the gay community acknowledged that because of the controversy gays and lesbians were more “organized” than ever before. One gay activist said that

the controversy “made me realize that other people have got to start speaking up . . . and let the people in the middle know that being gay is not bad” (Morrill et al. 1998). Another activist remarked, “If they hadn’t started it, we would never have been in their faces. We didn’t start this. . . . As long as they continue to say things, we’re going to be there” (DeAngelis and Brown 1997).

The strength of the opposition was palpable in other contentious cities as well. In Denver when the school board voted to remove a video that contained a reference to evolution as “fact” rather than “theory,” board members received an outpouring of angry calls and letters that led them to overturn their decision. Hundreds of citizens signed a petition to save the job of a high school teacher who was fired for showing Bertolucci’s R-rated film *1900*. In Fort Worth hundreds of parents and citizens wore green ribbons and showed up at school board meetings to protest the board’s decision to remove the book *The Last Mission* from Tarrant County middle school libraries, and three hundred residents signed a petition within a week of the board’s decision demanding that the book, which chronicles the lives of a group of Jewish teenagers during World War II, be reinstated. Similarly, when trustees in the Burleson school district of the Fort Worth area banned Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, there was a “torrent of criticism” from residents who opposed the ban. At a public meeting to discuss the issue the newspaper reported that “parents who supported the ban felt ‘overwhelmed’ by the other side” (Weissenstein 1997). Business leaders and a newly formed community group, Friends of Caelum Moor, came to the defense of a public sculpture that was under attack by twenty local churches because the sculpture’s 540 tons of pink granite monoliths were supposedly linked to Satanism. Many citizens in the Fort Worth area spoke out in defense of the challenged artwork even in the face of well-organized and visible campaigns supported by religious leaders in the community.

In Dallas, when school officials canceled a school group’s visit to Disney World in response to pressure from the local chapter of the Christian Coalition, thirty parents met with district officials and demanded that they reverse their decision. In Plano, Texas, part of the Dallas metropolitan area, parents formed a new group, Keep Quality in Plano Schools, to oppose efforts by the school board to add a creation science-oriented textbook to the high school curriculum. After trustees were “flooded” with mail and phone calls (one board member said he received more than seventy calls on the issue), they unanimously voted to bar trustees from purchasing copies of the controversial book. This pattern of strong, organized opposition to

perceived censorship, largely absent in cities of cultural regulation, is a defining aspect of cultural conflict in cities of contention.

Battle Lines

Across the four contentious cities, observers and participants repeatedly used culture war language to describe the conflicts taking place in their communities. The *Charlotte Observer* variously described the dispute over *Angels in America* as a “preemptive strike,” a “blow up” with plenty of “sound and fury,” a “polarized debate,” and a “bitter controversy” during which participants “took off their gloves” and exchanged “barbed letters” in the “nastiest political drama in local history” (see T. Brown 1996a and 1996b as an example). More directly and almost torn from a page of James Davison Hunter’s book, the newspaper noted that the *Angels* conflict indicated that “Charlotte’s culture war is far from over. The debate was the most recent skirmish in a struggle between religious authority and individual freedom” (*Charlotte Observer* 1997). Images of warfare were tossed around by participants in the conflicts themselves. The artistic director of the Charlotte Repertory remarked, “This battle has got to be fought for Charlotte to get to the next artistic level” (Williams, Brown, and Wright 1996). Such sentiments were echoed by a local businessman who supported the theater: “This is a battle, and it’s not over. They picked this fight. Already, they have shown they don’t have a stomach for it. And we haven’t even started” (DeAngelis and Brown 1997). On the other side, a county commissioner who was critical of the play noted that the conflict was creating a “division that was tearing apart the fabric” of the Charlotte community (DeAngelis and Smith 1997).

In Dallas the struggle over the high school textbook *Of Pandas and People* was described using culture war imagery, with the newspaper noting that the two competing sides were “actively looking for people who will help them win the ideological war in Plano schools” (Barrionuevo 1995). Similarly, in Fort Worth conflict over the middle school book *The Last Mission* raised the specter of warring factions. The *Star-Telegram* claimed there was a “line in the sand” separating “the foul-mouth, course meanderings of singers, songwriters, authors, entertainers and other public officials” and the supposedly upstanding and decent members of the community. The newspaper placed the dispute within the larger culture wars, writing, “But the modern-day culture war knows no boundaries. And the latest pop-culture skirmish in the war now happens to fall upon one of Texas’ finest school districts” (Raben 1995). After convincing the school board to ban *The Last Mission*, the activist

group Parents Advocating Greater Education (PAGE) noted that the group would continue its struggle to fight for decency. "The battle isn't over. . . . There are other books," said one of the group's leaders (Berard 1995b). Another parent noted, "I've never believed in conspiracies. But this is so pervasive, so profound. I believe there is a real war going on, and I think we're about to get into it" (Berard and Bowen 1995). An opinion columnist described the conflict in similar terms, as a kind of battle between two incompatible positions, "If you believe that words themselves are evil, then line up behind Vaunda Whitacre [parent who initially complained] and check every word in every book. But if you believe, as I do, that words are only important within their greater context . . . that words themselves are not evil, only ideas are . . . and that the idea of censorship for everybody is one of the greatest evils, then line up on the other side. Either way, pick a side. This really is war" (Lieber 1995). The notion of polarization and division was also employed by a newspaper columnist in Fort Worth to describe the conflict over a contested mural painted by a group of Hispanic students, noting that the conflict was "turbulent," fostering "heated debate between white and Hispanic residents, between grown-ups and teenagers, and between neighborhood homeowners and shopkeepers who cater to the Berry [a Hispanic neighborhood] counterculture" (Kennedy 1997).

In Denver a reporter for the *Post* described a public meeting where school board members considered banning a high school film about evolution as a "lion's den," noting that there "was a ferocious atmosphere" and "the troops arrived and the battle was joined" (Makkai 1996). Unlike cities of cultural regulation, activists and observers in cities of contention were quick to characterize their disagreements as epic struggles, drawing on a full arsenal of war-related images and metaphors to make their points.

Name-Calling

When groups fight over the moral high ground in an effort to assert what is good, right, and just for their communities, it becomes tactically important to undermine the legitimacy of opponents. This is done by questioning motives, characterizing the other side as extremists, and connecting opponents to discredited groups and ideas.

For example, in Fort Worth a dissenting school board member who voted in favor of keeping the book *The Last Mission* in the middle school library discredited fellow board members by linking them with fringe elements of society. He asked, "What's going to happen when the next group of skinheads comes by and say they want certain books banned?" (Berard

1995c). A defender of the ban, who also opposed educational reform and “whole language” teaching in her school district, remarked, “I don’t know if you can link it [reform] with communism, but there is a thread there” (Berard and Bowen 1995). In the case dealing with the “graffiti art” mural by Hispanic teens, a white resident stood up at a town meeting and described the Latino kids’ break dancing as “appalling.” She explained, “Hispanic boys were standing all over the sidewalk!” and added that the mural was an act of “vandalism” (Kennedy 1997). Linking youth to crime and deviance and characterizing their behavior as “appalling” served as a rhetorical tactic in the battle to claim the moral high ground.

In Charlotte, especially surrounding the *Angels* controversy, harsh words were exchanged from the very beginning. A reporter noted that “both sides of the debate have circled warily, slinging words instead of swords: obscenity and indecency; hypocrisy and censorship; criminal; slanderer; pervert; neo-Nazi; mean-spirited; narrow-minded; intolerant; bible thumpers; and ‘nippy arts bureaucrat’” (Conrad 1997). In a letter to the editor, one local pastor described supporters of the play as people who “appreciate nudity, simulated homosexual acts, vile and vulgar language and Sodom and Gomorrah-type morality.” He went on to say that “clean-minded, holy and righteous people” should stay away in order to avoid moral degradation (Willis 1996). One of the commissioners who opposed the play remarked that homosexuality is a “problem” and continued, “If I had my way, we’d shove these people off the face of the earth” (Hurley 1997). On the other side, a pro-*Angels* supporter wrote to the *Charlotte Observer* and described the activism of one local minister in the following way: “He and other small-minded people promote some of the true evils in our society: hate, bigotry and intolerance of others’ beliefs” (Derhodes 1996). Another writer noted that “the greatest danger to society comes from the religious crusaders bent on the homosexual holocaust” (Nuzzo 1996). A county commissioner who supported *Angels* compared his fellow commissioners to those in Nazi Germany who “began to identify the Jews and other groups that didn’t fit their idea of what was ethical and moral and what represented traditional values at the time” (Kelley 1997).

In Dallas parents who were opposed to a gay magazine in the public library referred to homosexuality as an “abomination” (Becka 1997), and in Denver when a review committee agreed to remove a pro-evolution video from the high school biology curriculum, citizens attacked both committee members and the families who raised the original complaint, calling them “religious fanatics,” “know nothings,” and “pushy ideologues” with “narrow-minded beliefs” (Posavec 1996). In cities of contention, church

leaders from different denominations trade sharp barbs, fellow county commissioners attack one another, and neighbors question one another's motives and sense of decency.

Web of Connections

Theories about the culture wars suggest that there is a web of concerns connecting what might appear on the surface to be unrelated issues, including arts and culture, education reform, abortion, gay rights, and popular entertainment (Hunter 1991). After Pat Buchanan announced at the 1992 Republican National Convention that America was in the midst of a culture war, journalists and activists alike have been quick to group together a diverse array of social and cultural conflicts as evidence of Buchanan's claim. As Hunter describes it, the issues motivating activists in the culture wars are rooted in differing worldviews—fundamentalism and orthodoxy versus secularism and relativism. Cities of contention stand out from other kinds of cities in the extent to which activists link conflicts to larger issues facing the nation or their communities.

Many protesters linked arts conflicts to a "gay agenda" that stood in opposition to American "family values." Others more broadly claimed that the "wrong" culture has the power to undermine American life. Charlotte's Rev. Joseph Chambers, a stalwart opponent of *Angels in America*, said that the play is part of a larger group of events that "should be an example to all traditional Americans of what the radical gay community and those who support them intend for this nation." He added, "This drama is not about art or eight seconds of nudity. It is about the destruction of moral consciousness" (Chambers 1996). Harry Reeder, a local Charlotte minister, wrote an opinion editorial claiming that the arts community promoted "an aggressive cultural agenda that is absolutely committed to the total reconstruction of our culture" (Reeder 1997). In Denver a teacher who was fired for showing an R-rated film to high school students—Bertolucci's *1900*—linked the disciplinary action to "an anxious community worried about seemingly out-of-control children, low academic scores, increasing banality of popular culture as seen on the Springer show, and as seen in the media" (Simpson 1998).

In addition to concerns about the "gay agenda" and general moral decay, several conflicts were linked to fears of secular humanism creeping into the classroom. In Fort Worth the attack against the book *The Last Mission* was made from the same group (PAGE) that also opposed critical thinking, cooperative learning, multiculturalism, and whole language learning. The

battle over *The Last Mission*, which contains profanity, became an opportunity to oppose educational materials and teaching styles understood as undermining traditional education. As noted above, members of PAGE linked the book controversy to notions of “critical thinking,” dangerous ideas of “liberating children” from their parents, and the broader influence of “communism.” The conflicts over books in Fort Worth also revealed the fear that national outsiders, for example, “liberals” representing the federal government, were trying to impose their values on local schools. In one exchange when a school board member defended the selection of library books—including *The Last Mission*—by pointing out the professional training of school officials, parents erupted with boos and jeers, dismissing the judgment of national experts. In Dallas parents objected to the school board’s decision to adopt a textbook, *Of Pandas and People*, that discusses intelligent design and creationism. The supporters of the textbook had previously taken public stands to ban condom demonstrations in biology classes and to support a school board resolution affirming the importance of “traditional moral values” in the classroom. Members of the Citizens Alliance for Responsible Education, who supported the creationism textbook as well as a “traditional values” resolution, argued that a “larger agenda” was at stake. One activist noted that “Plano’s long-held reputation for excellence was being infected by national trends,” including those that were “pushing elementary school children to do critical thinking,” which “leads them to develop values different from their parents” (Barrionuevo 1995). Debates about the biology textbook were clearly embedded in a larger web of issues dividing the Plano school district in Dallas.

Several of the conflicts across the four contentious cities were linked to larger issues of race and diversity. In Fort Worth parents asked to have Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* banned from a middle school library because the book contained scenes of rape, lesbianism, premarital and extramarital sex, and profanity. Yet some residents felt that the conflict over the book was linked to broader racial struggles in the community. An African American school board member explained, “I subconsciously have to wonder: Could it be the uproar over this is because it is African American in nature?” An African American parent added, “If Southlake [a suburb of Fort Worth] wants to embrace every one of our cultures, this ban is not the move to make” (Berard 1995d). When a local African American minister challenged a state-adopted history textbook because it contained what some considered a “proslavery” passage, he linked the issue to an ongoing concern about the lack of “African American representation at the executive level in the school district” and the lack of racial diversity on the cheerlead-

ing squads in local schools (Lee 1996). When residents objected to a mural painted by Latino students, the conflict brought up deeper concerns about ethnic tolerance. One resident declared at a town hall meeting, "I don't appreciate the police treating Mexicans as second-class citizens" (Ruiz 1997). What distinguishes cities of contention from other cities is that protests are lightning rods that animate broader tensions and disagreements over sources of moral authority, feelings about pluralism and diversity, and visions of community.

Crossroads and Crosstalk

Residents in cities of contention were often locked in bitter disagreement over the future of their communities. As discussed in earlier chapters, cities that experience rapid population change and growing diversity are more likely to fight over art and culture. In Charlotte, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Denver—where population changes were dramatic in the 1990s—activists and the news media often linked arts conflicts to their community's struggle to define and defend its values and vision in the face of change. Residents in these cities found themselves at a "crossroads," and decisions to remove or restrict books, plays, and exhibits were seen as decisive moments in setting the community on one path (characterized by decency and respect for traditional values) versus another (characterized by free expression, cultural vitality, and progressivism).

As described above, the teacher who was fired for showing Bertolucci's *1900* to his high school class in a Denver suburb was quoted as saying that the conflict was a "lightning rod for an anxious community worried about seemingly out-of-control children" (Simpson 1998). In Fort Worth when *The Last Mission* was initially banned, a columnist made reference to the city's population growth when he noted that "the act [removing the book] seemed so unexpected, so out of character with the progressive bedroom community's handling of its fantastic growth so ably" (Lieber 1995). This is precisely what is at stake in many arts controversies—the changing "character" of the community. Clearly, in Fort Worth many critics felt that certain "progressive" ideas of education were out of character for the community. A front-page headline in the *Star-Telegram* read: "Residents Faced with Growth, Image and Educational Decisions" (Mullen 1995). Spilling over from education to public art, the debate over the *Caelum Moor* sculpture was also about community change and the image of the city of Arlington (part of the Fort Worth metro area). Residents who decried the sculpture as satanic were concerned about the city's image. One person explained,

"To me it is very offensive to be known as a town that has statues that are demonic" (Gonzales 1997). Echoing this sentiment a local pastor explained, "Our perspective is that the best for our city is Christian faith and Christian principles, even for those who don't believe" (Doclar and Brady 1996). On the other side, art enthusiasts, business leaders, and others claimed that the sculpture was a "gateway" for a growing, progressive community (Hardee 2000). The newspaper editorial board noted it would be an "embarrassment" if the city removed one of its most prominent pieces of commissioned art (*Forth Worth Star-Telegram* 2000). For many residents and officials, Arlington's future as a traditional or progressive community hung in the balance as the city debated whether to accept or reject a piece of visible public art.

In Charlotte the controversy over *Angels* was repeatedly framed as a struggle over the future of the community. The *Charlotte Observer* editorial page described the city as being at a precarious crossroads with regard to the arts, diversity, and community standards: "This is an increasingly diverse community, still growing and still growing up. Tolerance, being a two-way street, perhaps the best we can hope for is a necessarily uneasy consensus in favor of a necessarily precarious balance. Anything more would force the arts into a box, where they could not flourish and nourish this community—or, at the other extreme, squelch the expression of moral concerns at a time when, in a much larger sense, moral concerns have never been more relevant or more urgent" (*Charlotte Observer* 1996).

Throughout the *Angels* controversy, participants on both side seemed to cry out, in the words of the famous 1950s television game show *To Tell the Truth*, for the "real" Charlotte to "please stand up." One columnist put it this way:

Charlotte has become the very model of a new Sun Belt City—clean, progressive, tolerant, efficiently governed, prosperous—envied, admired and emulated. Then, in a single week, a majority of county commissioners thumbed their noses at tolerance, and at the community's arts, cultural, business and civic leadership. Suddenly, people were asking: Is this a real turning point, a permanent change? But, there's no evidence that the city and its people have fundamentally changed, or that Charlotte has stopped being Charlotte. (Shinn 1997)

In letter after letter and quote after quote, people referred to Charlotte as an "up-and-coming city," a city that has finally rid itself of its constricting "Bible Belt," a city that is "emerging and enlightened," a "progressive

city." These images stand in contrast to a city that prefers the "Dark Ages," a Bible Belt city that has been "tightened to a constricting and embarrassing straitjacket" (Calabrese 1996), or a place where "yahoos sit on porches in suspenders, felt hats and rocking chairs, shelling peas" (Rothrock 1996). Charlotte mayor Pat McCrory, in describing the conflict over *Angels* as well as a related protest over ads for strip clubs featured in the city's visitors' guide, suggested that the controversies served to "spotlight the moral debate emerging as the city grows." University of North Carolina-Charlotte geography professor Alfred Stuart added, "Like the debate this year over the nude scene in 'Angels in America,' the ad flap is part of Charlotte's struggle to define itself. We are seeing a piece of the larger picture of growing pains as we move from small-town Charlotte to cosmo-Charlotte. There is a kind of cultural frontier out there. We're still struggling to hold on to old values and accommodate new values and new people" (Hopkins 1996).

While the sign at the crossroads is clear, the right direction is not. Many felt like change came too quickly and at too great a cost. Commissioner Bill James wrote, "To put it bluntly, diversity is okay, but perversity is not. You and some of your friends may wish to promote an enlightened new south, but I have no intention of allowing Mecklenburg County to become the southern equivalent of moral sewers found elsewhere in the U.S." (Feeley 1997). A GOP activist acknowledged that times have changed in Charlotte, requiring new boundaries and new "lines" demarcating acceptable behavior: "The tides of time have a way of washing away that line. And the line has to be redrawn over and over and over again in order to see how far we've come and how far we have to go" (Summa 1998). The one area of consensus surrounding the *Angels* controversy was that whatever the outcome, it was, in the words of one county commissioner, "a defining moment in the history of this community and we are about to find out who we really are" (Kelley 1997).

Showdowns

In cities of cultural regulation, as noted above, there was relatively little opposition or push back against attempts to restrict art and culture. When there was resistance, it typically came in the form of lawsuits by professional activists representing civil liberties groups. While these lawsuits were often long and drawn out, they seemed to have the effect of siphoning away some of the heat and fury from a controversy. In cities of contention, in contrast, the most visible disagreements typically reached an emotional crescendo at a public showdown. Charlotte's showdown took place when seven hundred

residents flooded a county commissioners' meeting to argue for and against cutting funding to the city's arts and sciences council. In Denver "more than 300 people tried to cram into a board room that seats only 230" on the evening that the school board debated whether or not to ban a pro-evolution science film (Bingham 1996). In Fort Worth hundreds of residents showed up to a school board meeting wearing green ribbons to show their opposition to censorship and their support for both *The Last Mission* and Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. At a Fort Worth town hall meeting, more than 180 angry residents gathered to discuss the fate of the "graffiti art" mural. When the Dallas school superintendent canceled a student-produced television program because of an interview with a transgendered person, more than fifty people showed up at a school board meeting to complain that the decision—affecting a largely black school—was racist. Protesters packed the small board meeting, shouting and chanting and forcing the board to adjourn and reschedule its meeting. More than one hundred people showed up at the council meeting of the city of Lewisville (within the Dallas city limits) to argue over whether the local library should be allowed to carry a gay newsmagazine. Finally, when the Plano, Texas, school board met to discuss adopting a creationism textbook, more than two hundred people showed up at what was described as a "chaotic" meeting, full of "angry residents" who were shouting and blurting out comments. There is no evidence that any of these public showdowns led to violence or arrests. They were, perhaps, relatively civil and tame compared to some of the more strident protests that animate recent American political history—from civil rights to abortion. Yet compared to most other cities, especially cities of cultural regulation, Charlotte, Denver, Fort Worth, and Dallas stood out for the frequency and intensity of public showdowns over art and culture. In these places opponents and supporters of art, books, and films were willing to step up and stand out, bending the ears of public officials and meeting each other in the proverbial public square to bear witness to their cause and concern.

Cities of Recognition: San Francisco, Albuquerque, San Jose, and Cleveland

At the beginning of my freshman seminar on cultural conflict, I instruct the students to write down something they deeply value—a way of life, a philosophy, or a belief—that impinges on public life and about which people disagree. Some students list their belief that “protecting the environment” and living a “green life” is a moral imperative; or that abortion is always wrong; or that marriage is a right that should be available to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation; or that “the word of God” is absolute. Then I ask them to write down a social group with which they most identify—the group that defines, in large measure, how they think of themselves and how they represent themselves to others. Some students list their race or ethnicity, others their country of origin or their religion, and still others choose more temporary and contingent groups like their sorority or fraternity. I continue with the exercise: “Imagine that someone wants to erect a monument in the middle of campus that denigrates the value you most hold dear.” Then I ask, “What if the monument instead presents an offensive stereotype of the group with whom you most identify?” “Which monument,” I ask, “would you feel most inclined to speak out against? Which monument would inspire you to join a protest, write a letter, or march to the chancellor’s office to demand that the monument be removed?” The exercise reveals that insults to identity are often more salient, more powerful, and more troubling than insults to “values.” Students, it seems, think they can more easily live with public symbols that present opposing values (even when those values are antithetical to something they believe strongly in) than symbols that attack their personhood or identity. Of course, the two concepts are not distinct. A person’s values often emerge from or are linked to group memberships. Nonetheless, when forced to artificially distinguish

between the two—identity versus values—offense is more likely to circle the wagons of identity. In group discussions another crucial issue emerges. Students' willingness to "tolerate" the offending monument varies across identity groups. Some identities provoke greater emotion and more intense reaction than others. In particular, students who identify with groups that face prejudice, stereotyping, or other forms of stigma—ethnic and religious minorities, for example—are more acutely sensitive to insult. It is precisely these threats to personhood and identity that take center stage in *cities of recognition* (CRs)—San Francisco, Albuquerque, San Jose, and Cleveland.

The notion of recognition—or more precisely the politics of recognition—emerges from a rich literature on identity politics and multiculturalism. Political philosopher Charles Taylor (1994) uses the term "politics of recognition" to argue that the government has a responsibility to accommodate the needs and interests of "groups" above and beyond those of individual citizens. Traditional liberal democratic philosophy—in the spirit of Thomas Hobbes, Emanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, and John Locke—views "individual rights" as the essential foundation for law and government. From this perspective, all individuals are created equal, endowed with inalienable rights and the freedom to pursue their fullest human potential as citizens and workers. According to Taylor though, such "universalistic" criteria—treating all individuals equally based on a common humanity—fails to acknowledge that individuals belong to groups and that group identity is essential to full and equal democratic participation. In short, Taylor argues that an individual's sense of self is formed in relation to their group membership. When a group is misrecognized, misrepresented, or demeaned in some way, individuals who belong to that group experience an identity crisis in which their status, self-worth, and citizenship is challenged. As Nancy Fraser argues, "To belong to a group that is devalued by the dominant culture is to be misrecognized, to suffer a distortion in one's relation to one's self" (2000, 109). Thus preserving and protecting the culture and identity of groups might be necessary to ensure full and equal political participation.¹ The politics of recognition calls for members of "misrecognized" groups to reject dominant images and advocate for self-representation, in effect replacing negative depictions with a self-affirming culture.

In cities of recognition, groups seek an accurate and fair representation of themselves in their city's arts and culture. Unlike Taylor, in this chapter I avoid engaging in debate about the stakes of political representation. For example, I do not claim that eradicating a city of offending images of gays and lesbians will necessarily make gay and lesbian individuals more effective or engaged citizens. Nor do I make a normative claim that group rights

should be considered alongside individual rights. Instead I simply accept Taylor's basic premise that putting forward an "authentic" identity—free of stigma and stereotypes—motivates historically marginalized groups, especially those who live in "hyperplural" and diverse cities like Albuquerque, San Francisco, San Jose, and Cleveland, to protest art and culture.²

Sociologists have long argued that subordinate groups in society can exercise power by taking control of the meaning or interpretation of public symbols and cultural presentations such as books, songs, fashion, and media images. Through the creative appropriation of art and media, working-class youth have protested the futility of their class position, women have resisted the abuses of patriarchy, ethnic minorities have protested bigotry and prejudice, and gays and lesbians have forged an identity against a backdrop of marginalization and invisibility (Dubin 1992; Taylor, Rupp, and Gamson 2004; Leblanc 1999). In cities of recognition, when a book, painting, film, sculpture, parade, or monument depicts what might be considered an unflattering, inaccurate, exaggerated, or underrepresented portrait of a social group, members of the group fight to correct wrong impressions, elevate their voice and presence, and otherwise "tell their story." Thus protests over art and culture are part of a long history of attempts by marginalized groups in society to resist dominant narratives and assert their own version of who they are and how they would like others to recognize them.

In addition to the social psychological ideas of self-worth and representation, this chapter also draws on the idea, discussed briefly in chapter 5, of a "new political culture" in postindustrial cities (Clark and Inglehart 1998; Sharp 2005a). Robert Bailey (1999) writes "clashes over identities, values and cultural attributes have taken center stage on the urban agenda" (11). As the demographics within cities skew toward a younger, well-educated, highly mobile, diverse, and creative workforce (centered on technology, new media, law, and financial services), traditional class-based, distributional politics are giving way to identity politics. Rather than arguing for better housing, greater investment in education, or improved working conditions, citizens are often joining together across class lines to advocate for lifestyle issues that tap into their distinctive sense of identity. Kauffman (1990) notes: "Identity itself—its elaboration, expression, or affirmation—is and should be a fundamental focus of political work" (67). New social movements are formed around environmental issues (slow growth, bike paths, "green" building codes); gender and sexuality (gay marriage and women's rights); and ethnicity (multicultural curriculum in public schools). The new political culture also includes religiously based and conservative movements (from prayer in school to English-only campaigns), although most scholars

focus on more liberal and progressive causes. Cities of recognition share many of the characteristics of those cities that exhibit a new political culture; with the exception of Cleveland, the other three CRs (San Francisco, Albuquerque, and San Jose) are quintessential postindustrial American cities—fluid, global, diverse, cosmopolitan urban centers. To the extent that many conflicts in these cities arise from the affirmation of group identity through cultural expression and protest—with people fighting over symbols, language, and meaning rather than material goods and services—we can link these conflicts to the larger changes transforming urban politics in the twenty-first century.

As noted in chapter 2, scholars have written persuasively about the link between arts conflict and identity politics. Steven Dubin (1992) claims that historically disadvantaged groups attack school curricula, museum exhibitions, films, and books as a visible way to demand wider recognition and acceptance. Dubin documents dozens of such protests: Latinos in the Bronx launched a campaign against the film *Fort Apache*, which depicts Latinos as criminals, gang members, and thugs; blacks in New York City protested an exhibit at Artist Space featuring a series of abstract images titled *The Nigger Drawings*; Asian Americans were incensed over the lack of Asian actors playing leading roles in the Broadway show *Miss Saigon*; Arab Americans protested against a song by the Cure based on the Albert Camus novel *Killing of an Arab*; Jewish audience members have repeatedly voiced concerns about unflattering and anti-Semitic depictions of Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*; and the National Stuttering Project put pressure on filmmakers to reduce the scenes with a stuttering character in the film *A Fish Called Wanda*. Many of the identity-based controversies recounted by Dubin were staged at the national level and reflect the organizational muscle of various well-established anti-defamation groups, but many of these conflicts also have a local dimension. Across the seventy-one cities in my sample, I find that identity politics is more prevalent in some locales than others. Where diversity and multiculturalism shape the political culture of a city, a higher proportion of protests involve identity and recognition.

Like Dubin, Erika Doss (1995) considers the link between identity politics and arts conflicts. Doss describes a controversy over a proposed mural in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Little Tokyo. The mural, by Barbara Kruger, was to be painted on the outside wall of the Museum of Contemporary Art and was to include a series of expressions within a rectangular banner that resembled the American flag. The mural included sections of the

Pledge of Allegiance along with statements about democracy and economic power, such as "Who is bought and sold? Who is beyond the law? Who is free to choose? Who salutes the longest?" Kruger's intention was to question whether the rhetoric of "patriotism" masks issues of social justice, racism, and economic power. To Kruger's surprise, the local Japanese American community reacted vociferously against the mural, claiming that the Pledge of Allegiance was a bitter reminder of loyalty tests used in internment camps during World War II. Again and again, residents complained that the mural was a "slap in the face," an "unnecessary reminder," an "insult," a "malicious defamation," and "salt rubbed on an open wound" (Doss 1995, 1–11). Doss contends that the reaction of Japanese Americans, in part, arose from Los Angeles's extraordinary levels of multiculturalism. According to Doss, in Los Angeles there "are no commonly held values and views about the meaning of democracy, citizenship, individual rights" (238). The complexities of the multicultural public sphere make controversies over art inevitable. In such environments, groups compete for recognition, seeking to have their story represented fairly and prominently rather than what might randomly emerge in a cultural free-for-all. Interestingly, hyperpluralism does not create a live-and-let-live mentality, as sociologists might expect in dynamic, fluid, and cosmopolitan urban centers. Instead, groups adopt a "tell it this way or no way" approach to culture, especially when the culture in question connects to their core identity.

Conflicts in both cities of cultural regulation and cities of contention often involve issues of identity, but they are less often expressed in terms of group identity. Religious people may object to a play or book about homosexuality because it offends their identity as Christians, but the conflict gets framed not as an issue of group representation but rather as a dispute over values, community standards, or the city's reputation or national image. The city and community are the primary objects of concern rather than how a particular group is represented or perceived within the city. In cities of recognition, by contrast, the conflict itself is framed specifically in terms of group identity. Citizens protest art and culture in an effort to stand up for their group and to achieve recognition and respect along with visibility.

These battles for recognition and respect appear disproportionately in the four cities taken up in this chapter. Across the four cities there was an average of 7.2 grievances over art and media considered offensive to ethnic groups, religious minorities, women, and homosexuals, compared to just 3.5 and 0.5 protests for cities of contention and cities of cultural regulation, respectively (see table 6.1). More importantly, whereas conservative grievances

are four times more likely than liberal concerns to dominate conflict in CCRs and CCs, in cities of recognition conflicts rooted in liberal concerns are as prevalent if not more common as conservative-based appeals.

As is the case in cities of cultural regulation and cities of contention, demographic factors influence the nature of cultural conflict in CRs. Table 6.1 illustrates that San Francisco, Albuquerque, San Jose, and to some extent Cleveland are much more diverse than the other two categories of cities. CRs have a greater degree of racial and ethnic heterogeneity, larger populations of artists, and rank higher on the cosmopolitan index. In addition, cities of recognition are significantly less conservative than cities of contention and cities of cultural regulation.³ The diversity, cosmopolitanism, and progressiveness of cities of recognition shape the conflict that unfolds over art and culture in these communities.

San Francisco is perhaps the poster child for multiculturalism and progressive politics. "San Francisco values" has become a code phrase used by conservative politicians to disparage opponents who are accused of "being out of touch" with mainstream society. For example, in an online fundraising pitch, former Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich warned that everything conservatives have worked so hard to accomplish could be "lost to the *San Francisco values* of would-be speaker Nancy Pelosi" (Garofoli 2006). Gingrich and others link such values to sexual permissiveness, the "gay lifestyle," the "coddling" of illegal immigrants, and secular humanism. San Franciscans celebrate their values and point to their spirit of tolerance, ethnic diversity, and expansion. Not surprisingly, Pelosi, maligned above by Gingrich, has deemed San Francisco the capital of the progressive movement in America. Political scientist Richard DeLeon captures the city's unique culture when he writes, "San Francisco is an agitated city, a city of fissions and fusions, a breeder of change and new urban meaning. It is a spawning ground of social movements, policy innovations and closely watched experiments" (1992, 2). In 1980 San Francisco was ranked as the nation's most ethnically diverse large city (DeLeon 1992, 14). By the 1990s more than 50 percent of the population was nonwhite. Asian immigrants are the largest segment of the growing metropolis, settling on the West Coast from mainland China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Cambodia, Burma, the Philippines, Japan, and Korea. This emerging multiculturalism has spurred what Bailey calls the "language of identity," which exists in many major cities but has taken a "grand turn" in San Francisco (1999, 329).

Nearby San Jose, located in Santa Clara County, mirrors San Francisco's ethnic makeup. In Santa Clara County according to 2000 census figures, foreign-born immigrants and their children are 61 percent of the popula-

tion. The county is home to people from 177 of the 194 nations in the world. The largest immigrant and refugee populations come from Mexico, Vietnam, China, India, Iran, and the Philippines. There is also a large local multi-ethnic Islamic community. Fifty percent of households in Santa Clara County speak a language other than English. San Jose, a multi-ethnic city since its founding as a Spanish colonial outpost, has rapidly emerged as one of the most diverse places in the United States (Moriarty 2004). The city's 1970s population was over 80 percent non-Latino whites; today this group makes up less than 30 percent of the city's residents. Approximately one-fifth of the city's current population is Latino, and one-fourth is of Asian descent. The diversity index for San Jose, like San Francisco, indicates that there is a 70 percent chance that any two residents selected at random will belong to different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

San Jose is not at the cutting edge of progressive politics—like San Francisco—but it does have a long history of promoting its multi-ethnic heritage. In the 1960s the city promoted downtown development and tourism by investing in its history as one of the earliest Spanish settlements. This strategy involved reviving La Fiesta de las Rosas parade and uniting the pan-Hispanic community around a mythical shared Spanish ancestry. Identity politics intervened when Chicano activists rejected the city's "unifying story" and boycotted the parade, which they felt "misrepresented" the history of Mexicans and mestizos who built the city under Spanish colonial rule. In a declaration evocative of contemporary identity politics, activists declared that they "were no longer going to turn the other cheek to insults. . . . [W]e know and understand ourselves, our history, better than anyone else" (Rodriguez 1999, 94). The politics of representation was established early in San Jose's history and is intimately related to its emergence as a multicultural community.

Like San Jose and San Francisco, Albuquerque also promotes its multi-ethnic background and rich Pueblo Indian and Hispanic traditions as a way to build civic pride and attract new businesses and tourists. By the 2000 census, non-Hispanic whites were no longer a majority in Albuquerque, representing just 47.7 percent of the population. Hispanics comprised 41.6 percent of the city's inhabitants. While the Native American population is numerically small (2.6 percent), people often refer to Albuquerque as a tricultural city because of the strong cultural presence of Pueblo tradition, represented by nineteen different Pueblo tribes in the Albuquerque metropolitan area. The city actively embraces its multi-ethnic heritage, incorporating multiculturalism into citywide policies related to education, housing, and the arts. For example, the 1995 Albuquerque cultural plan

specifically “promotes the *diversity* and quality” of Albuquerque’s “hidden cultural life” (Arts Alliance 2001).

Compared to San Francisco, San Jose, and Albuquerque, Cleveland has a very different ethnic profile. While much more ethnically diverse than the other two Ohio cities in my sample (Cincinnati and Dayton), Cleveland’s diversity index does not resemble the West and Southwest cities discussed here. Cleveland has, however, been an important destination for the migration of southern blacks throughout the twentieth century. African Americans comprise close to 20 percent of the metro area’s population in 2000 and close to half of the center city’s population. While relatively small, Cleveland still boasts of a diverse multicultural heritage, home to 117 ethnic groups speaking more than sixty languages and one of the largest concentrations of Jewish Americans in the nation. Above and beyond its racial and ethnic profile, Cleveland, like San Francisco, has a history of progressive reform movements. Cleveland was at the epicenter of the women’s movement in this country in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It organized the first state-based suffrage association in the nation, one of the largest women’s labor movements, and the first women’s pacifist association advocating for the end of war in 1924 (Scharf 1986). Cleveland was also at the “leading edge of liberalism” with regard to race issues for much of the twentieth century (Wye 1986, 135). As historian Christopher Wye notes, “Among cities of equivalent size and time, the Forest City [Cleveland] almost always offered black citizens an urban context that was in the vanguard of prevailing liberal sentiment” (1986, 114). To the extent that race and gender factor into contemporary identity movements, Cleveland has a track record of mobilizing and activating citizens around issues of political and cultural representation.

Importantly, all four cities of recognition have impressive records of electing ethnic minorities to important local offices. Cleveland elected Carl Burton Stokes in 1967, the first African American mayor of a major U.S. city. Since that historic election, “the city’s mayors have seemed to reflect every hue of the racial and ethnic spectrum, except white Anglo-Saxon Protestant” (Van Tassel and Grabowski 1986, 179). In 1995 San Francisco elected its first African American mayor, Willie Brown, who previously served as one of the first black elected state assemblymen. San Franciscans also elected the first openly gay man to public office in America, voting Harvey Milk on to the board of supervisors in 1973. San Jose elected California’s second Latino mayor, Ron Gonzales, in 1998, and Albuquerque elected one of the nation’s first Latino mayors, Louis Saavedra, in the early 1990s. These political victories are important in two respects. First, they are an indication

of the liberal and progressive political cultures of these four cities. Residents of San Francisco, San Jose, Albuquerque, and Cleveland can proudly boast that their cities have been at the forefront of progressive racial and ethnic politics, bolstering their identity as tolerant and inclusive places to live. Second, success in the political arena typically follows a period of growth in the density and scope of ethnically focused institutions and organizations—from businesses and churches to newspapers, civic associations, community centers, language schools, civil rights associations, and various interest groups. This associational infrastructure is an important resource for mobilizing members of an ethnic community around political issues, including elections. A preexisting associational infrastructure can help turn a private offense into a public protest. Such associations serve as sites for debating an issue, exchanging information, organizing protest activity, and supplying necessary resources to mobilize the community. Myria Georgiou notes that it is through such organizations that the politics of representation get “mediated, incubated and mobilized” (2006, 288).

Some political theorists argue that a “politics of recognition” precedes “real” political power, like winning elections or influencing public policy. In fact, Taylor (1994), Fraser (2000), and others claim that without a strong and positive sense of identity, groups who have been “misrecognized” and who suffer negative cultural identities will lack the confidence and respect needed to enter the public square as equal members of the political community. Recognition precedes full political representation. However, in our cities of recognition, the achievement of political gains may actually precede—or at least occur alongside—attempts by minority groups to demand proper recognition. As Robert Merton wrote, “When a once largely powerless collectivity acquires a socially validated sense of growing power (for example, through political gains), its members experience an intensified need for self-affirmation” (1972, 11). In other words, respect may lag behind power. Even while electing mayors and council members, minority groups continue to experience demeaning images of themselves in popular media, books, and fine art. At the national level the election of Barack Obama as the country’s first African American president will not suddenly obliterate distorted and distorting images of blacks that continue to circulate in mainstream culture. My suspicion, however, is that the election will activate a new round of identity politics as African Americans seek an inclusive and representative cultural democracy to go along with an increasingly pluralistic political democracy.

In sum, cities of recognition have branded themselves as multi-ethnic enclaves. They celebrate diversity through art, parades, and festivals. They

promote multiculturalism in tourist materials and on their official Web sites. They are at the forefront of demographic changes influencing the United States, and they have demonstrated a persistent pattern of progressive politics, including the election of minorities to important local offices. These cities are cloaked in a multicultural fabric—the modern Technicolor dream coat. But displaying and celebrating the “dream coat” is not without conflict as groups disagree about which colors, fabrics, and patterns to emphasize.

Albuquerque

The majority of conflicts over art and culture in Albuquerque, New Mexico, are rooted in identity politics in which diverse cultural groups promote or attack visible symbols in the community such as artworks and monuments in an effort to gain recognition for their group. Such conflicts are most frequent in cities, such as Albuquerque, with a high degree of ethnic diversity. In fact, in recognition of its diversity, the city has incorporated multiculturalism in a variety of public policies. As a tourist destination, Albuquerque promotes its multi-ethnic background, touting both its rich Pueblo traditions and Hispanic legacy, but this diversity is also a source of contention. In the 1990s, Native Americans, Hispanics, and Caucasian Americans clashed repeatedly over such issues as the ethnic background of the superintendent of public schools, the preservation of local Pueblo religious sites, and rules prohibiting Native American students from wearing native attire at graduation ceremonies. Such conflicts spilled over into the area of art and culture as well, with seven of ten cultural conflicts during the years of this study connected to grievances against work deemed offensive to religious or ethnic minorities.

Perhaps the most striking example of an arts conflict with its roots in identity politics erupted in January 1998 and involved a fight over a proposed public sculpture honoring the Spanish explorer and first governor of the New Spain province of New Mexico, Don Juan de Oñate. The sculpture, which was to be placed in a local park, was commissioned by the city to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the colonizing by Spain of the territory that is now the state of New Mexico. Anticipating that the monument might become embroiled in symbolic politics, the city selected three artists, each representing one of the three major cultural groups in Albuquerque—Native Americans, Hispanics, and Caucasian Americans—to work together on the design. The artists proposed a monument that would feature a fifteen-foot bronze figure of Don Juan de Oñate. In addition the work was to include a series of moccasins leading to and away from the figure of Oñate—a

symbol of the contributions of Indians both before and after the arrival of the Spanish settlers.

In spite of the multi-ethnic team of artists and the complicated mix of symbolism in the final design, the proposed monument led to a protracted debate between Hispanics and Native Americans over how New Mexico's past should be remembered. The Native American community, on the one hand, reacted vociferously to the proposed figure of Oñate, who they say massacred Acoma Indians and in one raid cut off the right foot of male members of the tribe. For this group, the proposed sculpture would dishonor their history and their contribution to the community. As one Native American representative said, "We feel that healing should come out of this monument. We do not need another fetish to injustice hung around our necks" (Reed 1998d).

On the other hand, the Hispanic community was concerned that Native American advocates were seeking to change the meaning of the sculpture, which they felt should rightfully celebrate the Hispanic legacy in Albuquerque. A spokesperson for the anti-Hispanic Defamation League explained, "Frankly, the Acoma Indians have no place in the memorial. After 400 years, the Spanish people should be able to stand up and say: 'It's our anniversary. We have made it'" (Reed 1998a). The debate over the sculpture spanned more than three years and involved a series of public forums, conflict resolution workshops, and debate among members of the city council, the mayor, and the local arts board. At the final public meeting, members of the city council voted on a compromise to keep the statue of Oñate but to place it in a less visible location in front of the city's art museum. At this final meeting a Hispanic resident told the council, "If your family is of Spanish descent, this is a personal attack on you, your family and your heritage" (Potts 2000). A group of American Indians reacted to the final decision by praying silently in front of the city chamber. Many wept openly (Potts 2000). In a city marked by a higher-than-average degree of ethnic diversity, this case highlights the role of identity politics in battles over art, with Hispanics and Native Americans vying with each other over whose symbols and whose history would dominate the public square in Albuquerque.

In another example of identity politics, the mayor of Albuquerque objected to a mural at the public library that he said contained an image that looked like a Spaniard stabbing a Mayan Indian. Concerned that the image would offend people of Native American descent who might see it as a symbol of hatred, he demanded that the arts council take steps to paint over the offending portion of the painting. In another case the mayor, along with local Latino residents, criticized the design of a sculpture selected by

the local arts board to serve as a gateway to Baretas, a Latino neighborhood in Albuquerque. The sculpture design, proposed by a Caucasian artist from Ohio, included three large abstract rings made of stone and steel. In response to the proposed design, one resident objected, "It's my opinion that Hispanic history should be done by a Hispanic artist who understands Hispanic culture and history" (Nash 1999). Members of the community ultimately selected an alternate design created by a local Latino artist that included a representation of Latino railway workers and a woman crossing a river. In essence the controversy reflected the efforts of a large and growing community of ethnic residents who demanded an artwork that would honor and celebrate their unique history and identity. Again and again, public artworks became rallying points around which ethnic minorities sought to legitimate their past and assert their future in Albuquerque.

In addition to ethnic diversity, Albuquerque also has a diverse religious community, with an especially strong Jewish population. In fact, the local Jewish Federation wielded enough political clout to convince the city to place a large sculpture in the downtown Civic Plaza to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. The proposed sculpture generated objections from local veterans groups who felt that the work would be more appropriate in front of a synagogue or on private property. Some members of the Jewish community agreed, fearing that such a visible symbol of Judaism placed in a multicultural city like Albuquerque would engender resentment and anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, most Jewish residents defended the monument, and the director of the Federation claimed that "it is very important for the memorial to be erected in a public place where many people will see it" (Asher 1997). This event represented a complex mix of identity politics—the Jewish community seeking public affirmation and recognition of its past; a Latino mayor supporting the campaign as a gesture of goodwill to an important constituency; local veterans opposing the memorial as "out of place" and "inappropriate" for Albuquerque's public square; a small minority of Jews seeking a less visible way to honor Holocaust victims and fearful of stoking resentment within such a diverse city; and, to intensify matters, a group of Arab Americans showing up at the dedication ceremony to protest the sculpture, claiming it wrong to honor Jewish victims when, they alleged, millions of Iraqi civilians have been killed because of U.S. foreign policy.

Cleveland

In Cleveland, Ohio, eleven out of twenty-one conflicts reported in the press revolved around identity politics. In particular, gender and sexuality fea-

tured prominently in three cases—a campaign against a billboard described by critics as sexist; protest over the NC-17 film *Showgirls*, which some opponents claimed demeaned women; and a demonstration by the Cleveland Gay and Lesbian Community Center outside a church where a gospel duo was singing a newly released, anti-gay song, “It’s Not Natural.”

In the billboard case a local rabble-rouser and one of the Cleveland’s “most prolifically offensive sign painters” (*Plain Dealer* 1996), erected a five-by-twenty-foot billboard in front of his store that lampooned 150 women who were part of a lawsuit against owners of a local mall. In the suit the plaintiffs claimed the owner willingly allowed “peeping toms” to watch women through bathroom vents (O’Malley 1996). The billboard featured a set of eyes peeping through an air vent at two pigs standing in front of toilets. The text read, “The so-called victims are so ugly they should be glad someone took the time to watch them.” In addition, the sign referred to the female litigants as “feminazis.” Community members called the billboard racist, sexist, and lewd. One of the women participating in the suit claimed that she was additionally “violated” by the sign and its depiction of her as a pig. Another claimed that the sign caused “emotional distress”—echoing the idea that misrepresentation can cause members of maligned groups to suffer significant distress. The injunction filed against the sign painter was denied by a county court. The judge overseeing the claim defended the sign painter’s First Amendment rights but ironically levied critiques firmly rooted in the language of identity politics. As quoted in the press, the judge admitted, “As a Jew, as a feminist, I am offended” (O’Malley 1996). At a neighborhood meeting a local resident argued that the billboard was an offense to the community and, more specifically, an offense to the community’s notion of itself as a progressive and tolerant place; and at a public meeting one resident said that the sign was not representative of a place where “most people are open to other people, or try to be.” In cities of recognition, residents protest art as a way to defend a city’s multicultural identity (Fried 1996). Ironically, it is in those places where diversity and tolerance are most valued that residents may be the least tolerant of ideas that challenge notions of inclusivity and tolerance. This approach to cultural life is reminiscent of graffiti spray-painted on a wall by the banks of the Seine River in Paris: “It is forbidden to forbid.”

In addition to conflicts revolving around sexism, religious minorities initiated two controversies in Cleveland. One involved a student and his family who, with the help of the ACLU, demanded that a portrait of Jesus Christ that hung at the front entrance of a public elementary school be removed. The second case involved a proposed boycott, initiated by the American

Jewish Committee of Cleveland, against a local German heritage newspaper that published stories denying the existence of the Holocaust and also denigrating Jews. In this case, identity politics guided the responses of both German and Jewish residents. Many German residents opposed the newspaper because it purposely linked their identity as Germans with a history that has been condemned by much of the world. The way in which "Germans" were represented and perceived in the local media became a key battle for these residents. Jewish residents objected to the newspaper because it was blatantly anti-Semitic in its denial of the Holocaust, a historical point of reference that is essential to American Jews' identity. As the director of the local chapter of the American Jewish Committee said, "Jewish people are *hurt* by such articles and they need to be ended" (my emphasis) (Miller 1996). This explanation does not appeal to wider conceptions of morality and decency but rather to the specific "hurt" experienced by members of a particular ethnic and religious group.

Depictions of race in schoolbooks, exhibits, and museum brochures were also a source of conflict in Cleveland. Several parents protested the inclusion of *Huckleberry Finn* in an eleventh-grade high school English class. In another case a group of African American employees at a local insurance firm organized a petition demanding the removal of paintings hung in their office building that were thought to depict black children as "pickaninnies," according to the curator of the exhibit (Pincus 1996). In yet another case the mayor of Cleveland, Michael R. White, raised concerns that an invitation to the opening of the city's new Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, which featured two white women on its cover, excluded ethnic groups who had made important contributions to the history of rock and roll. Finally, the local NAACP forced an elementary school to remove the game *Freedom* from school computers. The game, which teaches about the Underground Railroad, was said to also include stereotypical images of African American slaves. As the president of the local chapter of the NAACP remarked in the local paper, "Both my grandmother and grandfather were slaves and largely uneducated. But they never called children 'chile,' and did not substitute 'I'se' for 'I' or the like" (Sartin 1997). A demeaning portrait of a particular group, even when rendered using language and images of a begotten era, reestablishes a stigma that marginalized groups feel compelled to confront. In cities of recognition, getting history right is the foundation of many conflicts, especially in the context of public institutions like schools.

Three Cleveland protests revolved around concerns of Native American residents. The first case involved the vandalism of a statue of Christopher Columbus, which was spray-painted with the word "invader" (Miller 1995).

The second instance centered on a protest by a Cleveland-based artist initiated to contest the image of Chief Wahoo used by the Cleveland Indians as a mascot for the professional football team. The third case concerned a photograph exhibit by Andres Serrano of Native American children that included images that were “grotesquely” out of proportion and text that referred to Native Americans as “noble savages” (Jones 1996).

San Jose

In San Jose nine of the eighteen protests identified in the *San Jose Mercury News* involved grievances lodged by ethnic minorities. Several protests involved the large and growing Vietnamese community. Vietnamese émigrés—many of whom fled from communist rule—protested several exhibits and performances that involved artwork or artists from Vietnam. Beginning in 1993 émigrés forced the cancellation of an exhibit of Vietnamese artists at the San Jose Museum of Art. In 1994 protesters staged a fiery demonstration against Thanh Lan, a Vietnamese singer who was labeled as a communist sympathizer. In 1995 the same groups opposed a traveling puppet show from Vietnam as well as a theater performance at San Francisco State University by a Vietnamese director and writer. In 1996 hundreds of émigrés demonstrated against another traveling exhibit at the San Jose Museum of Art—titled *An Ocean Apart*—that included artworks by Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans. In every case activists accused the artists or exhibit sponsors of supporting propaganda aimed at presenting a positive image of Vietnam. The protesters perceived any attempt to complicate the “good and evil” narrative, which pitted the oppressive communists against a liberated and free Vietnamese American community, to be naive at best or a blatant betrayal at worst. Identity lies at the heart of these disagreements.

As suggested above, for some Vietnamese American émigrés, identity is largely contingent on their opposition to communist Vietnam and their affiliation with American freedom and democracy. At rallies and demonstrations, protesters sang “The Star-Spangled Banner” and waved American and South Vietnamese flags. Plays, exhibits, and music that celebrate or recognize Vietnam’s “other story” by emphasizing cultural exchange rather than cultural conflict undermine this pro-American identity. At the heart of several controversies was the perception that sponsors, theaters, universities, and museums were “insensitive” to Vietnamese American experiences, including painful memories of oppression and war. But there is no single Vietnamese American experience. Some younger Vietnamese are interested in exploring traditional Vietnamese culture, while other Vietnamese Americans

travel back and forth to Vietnam and maintain strong ties with family and friends still living there. Still others conduct business with Vietnamese merchants, attend international conferences with Vietnamese scholars, or read and enjoy Vietnamese magazines, books, and videos. Many Vietnamese Americans in San Jose welcomed the exhibit and attended in spite of the jeers and chants of “traitor,” “turncoat,” and “communist” from demonstrators outside of the museum (Tran 1998). Protest over Vietnamese art in San Jose was intended to send a strong anti-communist message to the Vietnamese government. As one demonstrator remarked, “Our protest forces them [the government] to reexamine themselves and to ask ‘if we are right, then how come our fellow Vietnamese are protesting against us?’” (Tran 1995). The demonstrations were also aimed at fellow émigrés and were intended to clarify the meaning and identity of a growing and diverse Vietnamese American community in San Jose. For many, but not all, émigrés in San Jose, “authentic” Vietnamese American experience was forged through struggles against the brutality of the Vietnamese government. And any celebration of the “culture” of Vietnam that failed to acknowledge these struggles was considered an insult to Vietnamese American identity and way of life.

Like Cleveland, San Jose also experienced protest over school material perceived as offensive and demeaning to African Americans. *Huckleberry Finn* found itself in the hot seat again when parents of a black student, along with the San Jose African American Parent Coalition, asked that the book be removed from reading lists at East San Jose schools or be replaced with a version in which racially offensive language had been deleted. According to local news reports, the coalition argued that the use of “nigger” more than two hundred times in the book was “damaging to their children’s self-esteem” (Suryaraman 1995). The effects of what Fraser calls the “stigmatizing gaze of a culturally dominant other” are at stake in cities of recognition (2000, 109). After heated debate both in the newspaper and at school committee meetings, a review committee recommended that the book be kept on required reading lists. The school district rejected the recommendation and voted to remove the book from the curriculum, although teachers were still permitted to assign it as long as students were given an option to read a different book or to read a version stripped of offending language. The African American Parent Coalition also organized a protest against the book *The Cay*, by Theodore Taylor, which chronicles the life of a young white boy who overcomes racial prejudice. The book was assigned to seventh-grade classes in the Oak Grove School District and was considered offensive because of the depiction of a black character who is described as “ugly with pink-purple lips and a face that couldn’t be blacker” (Slonaker 1995b). The

charge leveled against the book was that it bombarded students with racial stereotypes, damaged their self-esteem, and in effect destroyed a sense of community.

Several protests arose over how Latinos should be represented in public art, including a dispute over a public sculpture honoring a Latino figure skating champion from San Jose and an effort by a group of students to paint a mural in their high school that depicted the positive contributions of Latino culture. In both cases the conflict arose less in response to a sin of commission (for example, the presentation of an offensive stereotype) and more over a sin of omission (for example, the absence of representation or the lack of voice). In the first instance the San Jose arts commission wanted to erect a sculpture at the municipal sports arena to celebrate the achievement of five world-class figure skaters with ties to San Jose. The sculpture included portraits of the skaters along with quotes that were derived from interviews with each. The figure of world champion Rudy Galindo was to be accompanied by the text, "It's hard enough being a Mexican American skater when the judges are looking for an all-American strong boy." Skating enthusiasts in San Jose were upset over the politically pointed statement and convinced Galindo to edit the statement to the ethnically neutral, "I never imagined when I started skating that I would be the National Pairs champion twice with Kristi Yamaguchi, or that one day my hometown would cheer me on to win the United States Men's Championship" (*San Jose Mercury News* 1995b). The artists and the arts commission refused, arguing that the original words celebrated Galindo's triumph and struggle and would serve as an inspiration to Latino youth. Further, proponents of the original design wanted to protect the integrity of the artistic process and freedom of expression.

The Latino community came to the defense of Galindo and argued that the artists were taking advantage of Galindo because he was Latino, demanding that they "respect" his wishes and edit the original statement. In an ironic twist white artists and art commissioners were arguing for "true" representation of the struggles of Latino athletes—drawing on the skaters' own words to reveal the authentic experience of Latino figure skaters. Meanwhile the Latino community argued that the artists were disrespecting Galindo and Latinos by not yielding to their wishes. The politics of representation in this case were less about representation than about deference. Regardless of the content of the sculpture, the important point for the Latino community was self-determination. As one letter writer to the newspaper remarked, this conflict "demonstrates once again that Mexican Americans do not get the respect they deserve. Why can't he [Galindo] say whatever he wants?" (Vargas 1995).

In the second case a group of San Jose seniors at Lincoln High School wanted to erect a mural in the main quad of campus to celebrate Latino culture and boost “the esteem” of the 48 percent of the student population that were of Latino descent. The mural was a student-led response to the fact that Latinos, as a group, were the poorest academic achievers on campus and had higher-than-average rates of expulsion. The students sought a positive representation of their community and selected an off-campus Latino artist to help with the mural project. The school principal rejected the proposal because the students did not involve art teachers who taught at the high school, all of whom were white. The students circulated a petition and collected 486 signatures supporting the effort to employ a Latino artist. One student noted that the controversy was itself a symbol of the lack of respect afforded to Latinos at the school: “Latinos on this campus want to bring out our culture in a respectful way. They should be telling us ‘good job.’ It’s about time someone tells us we’re doing something good” (Garcia 1998).

San Francisco

In San Francisco four of the nine protests recorded in the press revolved around identity politics. In one case two school board members recommended a quota for the district’s high school reading list. Four of ten books assigned, they argued, should be written by nonwhite authors. One of the proponents said, “In a district that is nearly 90% students of color, the point of education is not to glorify Europe, but to let students see themselves in the curriculum” (Barton 1998). In another case Native Americans objected to a fiberglass statue of an American Indian warrior in front of a discount tobacco store. Opponents argued that the image tied Native Americans to alcohol and tobacco and was offensive, racist, and unacceptable. In yet another case a group of feminists in San Francisco demonstrated in front of a theater showing the premiere of Oliver Stone’s film *The People vs. Larry Flynt*. The film chronicles the 1970s public obscenity trial of Flynt, the publisher of the adult magazine *Hustler*. The protesters argued that the film glorified Flynt, whom they contended was a misogynist and child abuser, and also promoted pornography, in effect glamorizing violence against women. Protesters carried signs that included a picture of a man driving a jackhammer into a women’s vagina with the question, “Why do we glamorize this in America?” (Solis 1996). Another protester argued, “I urge those who share our outrage at the appallingly one-sided and distorted

picture . . . to campaign against the sexist male critics who have nominated the film for all manner of prestigious awards" (Russell 1997). In this case the "politics of representation" sought to challenge the notion that Flynt was a hero who pursued freedom of expression and First Amendment rights, emphasizing instead the idea that pornography stokes misogyny and violence against women. Protesters also attacked Hollywood and the mainstream media, rejecting the opinions of "sexist male critics" and demanding that women gain greater power in deciding which films get celebrated and honored.

The fourth case in San Francisco was the most contentious and garnered significant press coverage. When the city of San Francisco rebuilt its main library in a more modern downtown facility, they pledged to convert the old facility—the Old Main Library located in the Civic Center—into the home for a new Asian Art Museum. In the loggia of the old library were fourteen decorative landscapes flanking the grand staircase painted in 1929 by Gotardo Piazzoni, one of San Francisco's leading painters of his day. The Asian Arts Commission, overseeing the new art museum, wanted the original murals removed because the paintings did not provide the right context for viewing Asian art. The director of the museum wrote, "Cultural sensitivity requires that Asian art be shown from an Asian point of view, not displayed in the context of American or European art" (Brechtin 1997). Yet many in the art community and the city more broadly rejected this idea, contending that the murals reflected the multicultural history of the city. As one resident wrote to the paper, "To gut the old Main Library, to remove its magnificent loggia, to remove the Piazzoni murals to accommodate the Asian Art Collection would be an egregious violation of cultural and historical values. This must not happen" (Kasten 1998). Ultimately, the debate was about the value of the "Asian point of view." Should the museum be free from interference or distraction of Western art and, for that matter, from the opinions of non-Asians in the community? Supporters of the museum argued that this was to be "their museum," designed to represent the crowning achievements of Asian American culture.

In addition to the disproportionate number of liberal-based events (for example, those based in the concerns of women or religious and ethnic minorities), several common themes emerge across cases in cities of recognition. First, public officials avoid taking a public stand against identity claims. Second, protesters argue that "misrepresentation" causes real social-psychological damage. Third, notions of "respect" surface often, with offending artworks and presentations decried as a "slap in the face" of the offended

group. Fourth, protests emerge from organizations and activists who are advancing a broader agenda in the city. Finally, the notion of diversity and multiculturalism is, itself, an object of contention and disagreement.

Avoidance

Political scientists who study identity politics discuss three possible responses by public officials to group-based claims that center on identity or cultural values. Officials can (1) reject the claims, (2) they can endorse the claims and pursue policies that remedy the supposed grievance, or (3) they can avoid the issue altogether (Sharp 1999; Button et al. 1997). In cities of regulation, government officials chose option 2 and were extremely responsive to claims against artworks that were deemed offensive to community standards. In fact, in many cases officials themselves led the charge against offending artworks, books, or films. By contrast, in cities of contention public officials were often split over issues, taking public stances that were politically divisive and fueled the fire of electoral competition. It was not uncommon for school board members or city councilmen to attack one another in highly public ways. Yet public officials in cities of recognition were more likely to *avoid* taking a strong position on issues related to identity grievances (option 3). A typical response from a mayor, school board member, principal, or council member was to note that an issue would be considered carefully by recognizing and respecting the multicultural context of their city and the sensitivity of all involved. For example, urging harmony, the mayor of Albuquerque responded to the controversy over the sculpture of the Spanish conquistador Don Juan de Oñate by saying that “this is a time for us all to come together as one community to recognize the contributions of our ancestors to the rich and cherished *common* culture we share today” (my emphasis) (*Albuquerque Tribune* 1998). Similarly, the president of the school board in San Jose responded to the protest over *Huckleberry Finn* by saying, “We all know there’s been an injury to the black community nationally and locally. We have an obligation to handle the issue in a way that promotes healing” (Suryaraman 1995). This is not to deny that many people spoke out against attempts by minorities to edit or censor existing representations or to insert non-mainstream “stories” into museums, curricula, films, and libraries. People leveled charges of “political correctness,” arguing that opponents were too sensitive or that acceding to the demands of one group would lead to a slippery slope. “Where will it end?” asked one writer to the newspaper, responding to San

Francisco's attempt to institute a quota for nonwhite authors in the high school curriculum (Yanowitz 1998). While individual citizens sometimes pushed back against the claims of minorities, "the politics of recognition" was often devoid of formal politics. Elected officials were more likely to be found on the sidelines or playing the role of mediator rather than jumping into the heat of the controversy. Conservatives often argue that this reticence reflects the victory of "identity politics" over the past three decades, as people are increasingly wary to publicly criticize or refute the claims of minorities for fear of being labeled "racist," "sexist," or "bigoted." Yet this avoidance tactic on the part of elected officials is probably smart politics in a multicultural city. The rise of coalition-style electoral politics in big cities—especially in majority-minority cities where ethnic minorities represent more than half of the electorate—requires rhetoric of inclusion and cultural tolerance. In order to govern effectively, urban leaders cannot afford to alienate multi-ethnic, multi-class coalitions. Avoiding the "politics of representation" helps officials maintain fragile multi-ethnic electoral coalitions.

Words *Can* Hurt You

Scholars of identity politics claim that "misrepresentation" can cause emotional and psychological trauma for members of minority groups, resulting in a diminished sense of self when interacting with others in both social and political life (Fraser 2000). Unlike many of the conflicts in the other two types of cities, protests in San Francisco, Albuquerque, Cleveland, and San Jose often directly reference the pain, suffering, and hurt of minority groups. In this respect, unlike conflicts that revolve around more general concerns for morality, decency, tradition, or a city's image or brand, identity grievances are more personal. Parents argued that it was "hurtful" for their children to have to read *Huckleberry Finn* out loud, noting that it was "damaging to their children's self-esteem" (Suryaraman 1995). One parent remarked, "I think people are finally getting it [the damage caused by the word 'nigger']. For me, each sound of the word 'nigger' rings out like the sound of rifle fire, as the bullet tears through the face of Dr. King" (Beckett 1995). Similarly, Jews argued that they were "hurt" by articles that denied the existence of the Holocaust; Native Americans felt "demeaned" by the Indian warrior in front of the cigar store; Muslims argued that the unending barrage of anti-Islamic images in films was having "a real impact on the ordinary lives of Muslims," describing the movie *The Siege* as "honey poured on razor blades" (Hinds

1998), echoing Japanese Americans' critique of the Pledge of Allegiance mural as "salt poured on an open wound" (Doss 1995).

Respect and Self-Determination

In many cases when artworks misrepresent a community, it is perceived not only as hurtful but also as disrespectful. Time and again protesters claimed that a perceived slight was a "slap in the face"—words used by Japanese Americans in Little Tokyo to protest the Kruger mural (Doss 1995) and by Chester Steven, the president of the African American Parent Coalition in reference to the school board decisions to keep the book *The Cay* on the seventh-grade reading list. Steven remarked, "This is a slap in the face . . . especially when people can do the right thing and when they opt not to" (Slonaker 1995a). In San Francisco the director of the Asian-Pacific Democratic Club remarked in reference to the Piazzoni murals, "To display the murals in the most prominent place, the entrance, is intolerable; it's a slap in the face of the community" (Hamlin 1997). Latino high school students in San Jose talked about wanting a mural that presented "respectful" depictions of their culture and heritage. In Cleveland a Native American mother complained that Serrano's photographs were not "dignified representations," and critics of the Wahoo mascot told reporters that the image "trivializes a proud race of people. It mocks us. It does not honor us in any way" (Jones 1996).

It is interesting that the particular expression "slap in the face," on the one hand, resonates so forcefully with groups who find themselves defending their identity against perceived slights and offenses. Institutional racism and bigotry is a form of violence—an assault, abuse, and exploitation of a subjugated people. A "slap," on the other hand, is more like an embarrassing insult between people who are otherwise equal. There is an assumption of respect that is breached or denied by a slap. In multicultural communities, where minorities have achieved political power and where the community ethos embodies respect and inclusion (like in our cities of recognition), a perceived offense to one's group identity *and* an unwillingness to remove an offending image or object can carry the real sting of an unexpected and humiliating smack across the face.

In addition to bearing witness against disrespectful images, minority groups also engage in "resistance identity" or the "politics of presence" (Castells 2004; Phillips 1998). Manuel Castells argues that when groups are devalued or stigmatized, they assert their identity by the "exclusion of the excluders by the excluded" (9). In short, such groups, practicing

"resistance identity," will argue that dominant members of society (for example, whites) should not be allowed to make decisions or participate in cultural projects that seek to portray the dominated group's identity or heritage. Only black artists can depict black history; only Latino artists can tell the story about Hispanics in the United States; only women can accurately depict the struggles of women. Similarly, the "politics of presence" insists that "nonmembers are unable to properly understand the experiences of group members . . . and that a multicultural democracy requires moral deference to the marginalized" (Phillips 1998; McBride 2005, 499). It is inappropriate, or more precisely "disrespectful," to question or to challenge the ways in which a group wishes to see itself portrayed in art and media. This form of resistance appears throughout the cases in cities of recognition. In Albuquerque, residents of the largely Hispanic neighborhood of Barelás objected to a proposed public sculpture by a non-Hispanic artist. When the statue of Don Juan de Oñate was being debated and plans for the sculpture scaled down, a Hispanic resident remarked at a public meeting, "To not build this memorial is to deny Hispanics their place in history. How dare you, an Anglo [referring to a council member] cut back funding for a statue of Hispanics" (Potts 2000). Here moral deference is at work—with advocates for the sculpture attempting to marginalize Anglos and reduce or diminish their input—excluding the excluders in Castells's terms.

Another example comes from San Francisco, where the director of the new Asian Art Museum noted that the museum should also use only Asian architects because "non-Asians are attempting to tell the Asian Art Museum experts what is Asian art" (Brechin 1997). In arguing for the removal of *Huckleberry Finn* and *The Cay* from the reading lists at San Jose schools, black activists demanded moral deference because only African Americans can understand the hurt caused by certain words or depiction. The director of the African American Parent Coalition told reporters, "The word 'nigger' has meaning for African American people that no one else can really get inside of," adding that a story about slavery from a white viewpoint is not "adequate. . . . Accounts of slavery by Black authors are more powerful and accurate" (Dunridge 1995). In each case, whether minority groups are arguing about the content of artworks (for example, protest over specific depictions), about the process of producing artworks (for example, protest over the selection of artists), or about the right to debate whether or not something is offensive or damaging (for example, whites have no right to argue that "nigger"—when used in historical context—is not really offensive), respect and self-determination lie at the heart of the claims made by and on behalf of marginalized groups.

Connections to a Larger Agenda

In cities of contention, participants often linked their protest to larger disagreements taking place in their community or nationally—broader issues of school reform, national culture war issues linked to “the gay agenda,” or racial cleavages in the community. Likewise, in cities of recognition, arts protests are often connected to a deeper agenda—gay, black, Hispanic, or otherwise—being promoted by existing community organizations and activists. Native American Bob Haozous, whose proposed sculpture for the University of New Mexico was rejected because of his inclusion of barbed wire, claimed that the university’s position was related to broader issues of injustice and immigration. The barbed wire was meant to represent the many people who have been held behind razor wire for the reason of their affiliation with race and culture—Jews, blacks, Apaches, and Mexicans. Haozous claimed that the rejection of his sculpture was because “they [Anglo-Americans] don’t want to see the holocaust against brown people, about what they’re doing to them on the border” (Rodriguez 1996). One reporter in Albuquerque connected several arts protests to other issues of representation in the community, specifically debates over whether the positions of the new president of the University of New Mexico and the new superintendent of public schools should be filled by an Anglo, Hispanic, or Native New Mexican.

In the case of the proposed quota for minority authors for high school reading lists in San Francisco, one school board member who supported the quota made a direct connection with larger racial issues in California. In the context of a public meeting, he noted, “In light of the racial injustice in California’s recent votes to ban affirmative action and health care for undocumented immigrants, the board is sending a message across the country that it is a new day” (Asimov 1998). Efforts by the African American Parent Coalition in San Jose to rid schoolbooks of offensive racial language were repeatedly linked to larger issues of the success of African American students in school. The coalition charged the school district and teachers with indifference to black students—citing failing grades, lack of college preparatory courses in mostly black schools, and an overall hostile environment. The editors of the *San Jose Mercury News* (1995a) claimed that the coalition’s position on *Huckleberry Finn* was partly born out of its frustration with these larger issues and that “black parents and their children are under assault in this society” as “a growing coarseness marks discussion of race . . . leaving many black and other minorities feeling wounded.” In other words, debates over *Huckleberry Finn* are just the tip of the much-larger iceberg

of race relations both in San Jose and in the United States. Ultimately, “the politics of recognition” is not independent of larger political battles. Protests over art and culture that involve identity politics flourish in cities where activists have a history of mobilizing around broader issues of race and gender, where existing organizations (like anti-defamation groups, civil rights groups, and special interest school groups) exist, and where minority groups feel they have the efficacy and capacity to “send a message” both locally and nationally.

The Diversity of Diversity

San Francisco, San Jose, Albuquerque, and Cleveland are cities that celebrate and promote their multicultural identity. These are progressive, tolerant, and cosmopolitan cities with a history of inclusion. In each, multiculturalism is a citywide value and has become part of their urban brand. Throughout the documented cases of protest, city leaders and residents made reference to their diverse communities—either as justification for artworks that celebrate ethnic or religious minorities or as a defense for the need to change, restrict, or remove books and artworks that are offensive. Yet consensus around the importance and value of multiculturalism does not preclude residents from fighting over the idea of multiculturalism itself—a concept that means something different to different members of the community. These cities are so diverse that diversity itself is a subject of contention.

In some instances the source of disagreement came from within an identity group, splitting group members on either side of an issue. For example, in Albuquerque the Jewish Federation of Greater Albuquerque wanted to erect a Holocaust memorial to help the *diverse* community of Albuquerque learn to respect cultural and religious differences and remember the atrocities of the Holocaust, but Café Europa, a local group of Holocaust survivors, felt a memorial was inappropriate and worried that it would create “backlash” against Jews. As one member remarked, “To single out Jewish people within a multicultural state would only lead to ill feelings and anti-Semitism” (Asher 1997). In this case the notion of “multiculturalism” was itself contested. Some Jews felt it meant publicly honoring their heritage, while others felt it meant respecting the identities of others by not “singling” one group out from the rest.

Albuquerque’s controversy over the proposed Don Juan de Oñate sculpture, commemorating the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the Spanish explorer, is another example of how the idea of multiculturalism can cause splintering and fracturing. In commissioning the sculpture, the city

intentionally sought to celebrate its multicultural history, choosing a team of three artists to represent the three dominant cultures of New Mexico—Anglo, Native American, and Hispanic. But as one of the artists admitted after months of controversy, “400 years of living together has not brought Hispanic and Indian communities closer” (Reed 1998c). For Hispanics, the sculpture was an opportunity to highlight the Spanish influence on the city and state, which they believed was often overshadowed by recognition of Native American culture. For Native Americans, Oñate, known for brutal treatment of indigenous people, was a symbol of oppression and a “fetish to injustice” (Reed 1998b).

As in the case of the Jewish community, we see deep and painful splits among Albuquerque’s ethnic groups. Nonetheless, the commitment to the broader theme of diversity allows the community to honor their disagreements—with Hispanic activists arguing that infighting is a good sign, an indication that the Hispanic community is a diverse group willing to work for social change. As a representative of the Mexican American National Women’s Association remarked in the newspaper, “We may not speak with one voice, but that just shows we have a lot of strong voices.” This idea is echoed by a newspaper editorial that argued that “the recent disagreements are valuable in reminding the larger community that Albuquerque is home to people of not only diverse viewpoints, but of diverse understandings of what it means to be Hispanic” (Milligan 1998).

In San Jose a conflict between mainland Vietnamese and the San Jose Vietnamese American community showed cracks in the city’s multicultural foundation. Museum officials and art critics argued that an exhibition featuring paintings from Vietnam would help promote understanding and exchange across cultures—a worthy goal of any multicultural city. Yet many Vietnamese Americans understood their multicultural city differently and demanded that city leaders respect their painful history and celebrate their commitment to America by rejecting any exchange with communist Vietnam. Members of the Vietnamese community in San Jose were divided on this issue. Many attended the exhibition and wrote or spoke about it positively, while others stood outside the museum and shouted at their fellow émigrés who they considered traitors for even acknowledging art from the communist regime in Vietnam.

The debate over the Piazzoni murals in San Francisco’s Old Library reveals how “diversity of diversity” can exacerbate tensions over culture. Both sides in the debate appealed to the notion of San Francisco’s multicultural identity to argue their side. Nancy Boas, an activist in favor of leaving the murals in the new Asian Art Museum, explicitly noted that there are differ-

ing notions of diversity, remarking, "The subject of the mural's appropriateness has not been resolved. There are subtle issues of the multicultural heritage of San Francisco that we should examine before any decision is made" (Baker 1997). At a public meeting one supporter agreed, arguing, "The murals reflect the multicultural heritage that has always existed here. The Asian should embrace those murals." A local art critic wrote, "In arguing that the murals by a Swiss-born Italian American artist have no place in a museum of Asian art, the museum does itself the disservice of trying to pretend that multiculturalism is not here to stay, when everyday life in America tells us otherwise" (Baker 1997). On the other side, supporters of the Asian Art Museum contended that multiculturalism requires deference to the desires of the Asian community to present a "pure" Asian museum. Emily Sano, the director of the museum, took the argument of multiculturalism in an entirely different direction, accusing supporters of the Piazzoni murals of not recognizing that an Asian art museum is multicultural, even without the presence of Western art. In a letter to the editor Sano wrote, "The Asian Art Museum is a true panorama of multiculturalism—more than 12,000 art objects representing more than 40 cultures throughout Asia. It is regrettable that when people speak of multiculturalism, there is a tendency to register 'Asian' as one cultural entity" (Sano 1997). In yet another interesting twist, Sano's argument proved vulnerable to its own logic—many Asian Americans disagreed with one another publicly over the fate of the Piazzoni murals. Almost everyone involved in the debate agreed that multiculturalism was an abiding value for the city, but they disagreed on what this meant and how it should be reflected in decisions about art and architecture in San Francisco.

Like cities of regulation and cities of contention, cities of recognition exhibit common and distinct characteristics with regard to protest over art and culture. At the same time the boundaries between regulation, contention, and recognition sometimes blur. For example, identity politics are not entirely absent from cities of regulation or cities of contention, and attempts to regulate culture by invoking "community standards" can and do occur across all three city types, as do disagreements between traditional and progressive forces over the future of a city. Regardless of similarities a distinct "culture of protest" influences the shape and structure of cultural conflict in each type of community. Perhaps the most straightforward explanation for variation across the three types of cities has to do with diversity. Cities with the least amount of diversity are the most traditional and are most likely to *regulate* culture, police the border of decency, and advance agreed-upon community standards. As communities become more diverse, both

economically and demographically, they face a crossroads, with traditional members *contending* to hold on to a way of life that is increasingly challenged by newcomers who hold different values and who have a different vision for their cities. Once a community passes a threshold of diversity, identity politics takes hold as emerging ethnic groups demand to be *recognized* on their own terms. Diversity and multiculturalism become a source of controversy as citizens and leaders debate and shape the ideal community to meet their own conception of what it means to live with difference. Such a narrative, as compelling as it is, oversimplifies how and why protest activity varies. There are certainly other factors that complicate the story: different religious configurations in each city, the history of ethnic and racial relations, the political power of different interest groups, the strength and presence of connections between local chapters and national social movement organizations, and city-specific political dramas that influence the dynamics of protest. Yet complexity does not diminish the fact that patterns exist. None of us may live in a place that feels unequivocally like a *city of regulation*, *city of contention*, or *city of recognition*. But with some critical distance we might recognize the dynamics in our own cities as indicative of the themes examined here.

On Air, Our Air: Fighting for Decency on the Airwaves

The preceding chapters have examined the structure of cultural conflict in American cities. The book's argument thus far has been built atop a mountain of data. I have examined 805 cases of conflict over art and entertainment in seventy-one American cities, reported in more than 10,000 newspaper articles, along with survey data from three national surveys representing 75,000 respondents. Looking out over a widening landscape of protest and contention, patterns emerge below. We have seen that levels of cultural conflict vary across cities, that cities can be distinguished by three dominant "profiles of contention," and that local political and institutional context can influence levels of conflict. Our data reveal a strong connection between social change and protest over art and culture, and this pattern is borne out at both the city and the individual respondent levels. For example, cities experiencing rapid changes in immigration fight more over art and culture; *and* individuals who worry more about immigration and the pace of social change are more likely to favor restrictions on the content of books and television.

From the beginning I have employed a mountaintop perspective—high above the action. This approach stands in contrast to the existing writing and analysis of protest over art and culture that has focused disproportionately on the particularities of cases—the personalities of various stakeholders, the maneuvering of political and religious elites, the specific and often graphic nature of the offending art object, and the excesses of rabble-rousing artists (Dubin 1992; Bolton 1992; Rothfield 2001). In these analyses it seems as if every protest emerges from the perfect storm. Yet only by getting beyond individual and particular stories can we see and confirm larger patterns that give us insight into both the causes and the consequences of arts protest.

Other scholars, like James Davison Hunter (1991), have also taken a broader look at conflict by focusing on large climate changes in our culture—the analogical equivalent to global warming. Hunter argues that we have witnessed the heating up of the culture wars over the past few decades, with fundamental shifts in the balance of elements and atmospheric conditions (values, public opinion, discourse). In contrast, I look at differences across cities rather than changes over time. Standing in front of a data-driven weather map, I draw jigsaw-shaped patterns of red, blue, green, and yellow—shifting fronts, high-pressure areas, and differing levels of precipitation. While pointing at my abstracted map, I confess a certain distance from the real and revealing conditions on the ground.

This chapter is my attempt to zero in on the experiences and attitudes of real people who are in the trenches, actively engaged in struggles over U.S. culture. I position the voices of parents, grandparents, and citizens to speak for themselves. Interviews with parents and citizens who have joined local chapters of the Parents Television Council, a group dedicated to “cleaning up the airwaves,” echo three important earlier findings: protests over art and culture arise from the struggles of individuals to understand and define their communities in the face of social change; they serve as important democratic means by which residents respond to and engage these changes; and they are a form of expressive politics, a way to speak out and stand up.

The Janet Jackson Wardrobe Malfunction

On the evening of February 1, 2004, I was watching professional football’s championship game with friends and family at one of the millions of Super Bowl parties across the nation. Close to 90 million viewers watched Super Bowl XXXVIII, featuring the Carolina Panthers and the New England Patriots. Viewers and partygoers were undoubtedly indulging in chili, chicken wings, and other traditional football game fare; they were entertained by the hard-fought game, won by the Patriots with a field goal in the final seconds; and they were amused by some of the year’s most eye-popping television advertisements (rolled out to a massive viewing audience at a cost of \$2 million per thirty-second spot). In addition to the game, viewers encountered what has become a highlight of the Super Bowl, the half-time show—an on-field extravaganza featuring fireworks, a high-tech light show, mass audience participation, and hit musicians surrounded by hundreds of choreographed dancers. But something was different about Super Bowl XXXVIII’s halftime show, which featured performers Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson. It did more than entertain; it caused a fire-

storm across America. At the conclusion of the song “Rock Your Body,” and orchestrated to the lyrics “I’m gonna have you naked by the end of this song,” Timberlake coyly ripped off a piece of Jackson’s wardrobe to reveal her exposed breast and nipple. After the performance I walked into the kitchen and told my wife that I thought I had just seen Janet Jackson’s breast in the halftime show. I was unsure about what I had seen and no one else at the party seemed to notice the wardrobe malfunction—perhaps not surprisingly since, as it turns out, the exposed nipple was on the air for nine-sixteenths of a second. I promptly forgot about the incident until “Nipplegate”—a popular phrase coined by late-night television hosts and newspaper columnists—hit the headlines in the days following the game. The chairman of the FCC, Michael Powell, called the incident a “classless, crass and deplorable stunt” and called for a “thorough and swift” FCC investigation (Salant 2004). Close to 540,000 Americans sent letters and e-mails to the FCC complaining about the supposed indecency. Eventually the FCC issued the broadcaster, CBS, a \$550,000 fine, the largest in the agency’s history. The fine was overturned by a federal appeals court and the case, as of this writing, is slated to be reviewed by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Janet Jackson case poses a special challenge to my argument. First, the episode was truly national in scope—90 million viewers were potentially exposed to the offending nipple. Could my community-oriented approach to cultural conflict provide insight about such a large-scale national protest? Moreover, the reactions to Janet Jackson seemed immediate and visceral: viewers were shocked by the intrusion of nudity—if only fleeting—into what seemed like good American family entertainment. Given that the outrage seemed national in scope, it followed that the publicly recorded reactions—for example, the letters signed and sent to Washington—would likely be randomly distributed across the nation. Why would an exposed nipple offend families in Raleigh, North Carolina, any more than families in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania? With data from the FCC, I reviewed the number of complaints received from every zip code in the nation. When I aggregated complaints to the city level, I discovered that there were indeed big differences between Raleigh and Pittsburgh. In Raleigh there were 1.2 complaints filed for every 1,000 residents; in Pittsburgh, there were one-fourth of that number, or 0.36 complaints for every 1,000 residents (see table 9.1). Interestingly, many of the most contentious cities revealed earlier in this book—Atlanta, Dallas, Fort Worth, Charlotte, Raleigh, Nashville, and Phoenix—were also home to larger than average numbers of complaints. The data demonstrates that rates of immigration were positively correlated with higher numbers of complaints, echoing findings in chapter 3. Other factors,

Table 9.1 Complaint letters and e-mails filed with the FCC

	Complaints per 1,000 residents	Total number of complaints		Complaints per 1,000 residents	Total number of complaints
Akron, OH	0.46	302	Lexington, KY	0.81	328
Albany, NY	0.19	165	Louisville, KY	0.77	734
Albuquerque, NM	0.38	226	Memphis, TN	0.92	924
Allentown, PA	0.34	201	Milwaukee, WI	0.29	411
Anchorage, AK	0.52	118	Minneapolis, MI	0.57	1,451
Atlanta, GA	0.85	2,512	New Orleans, LA	0.40	509
Austin, TX	1.23	1,037	Newark, NJ	0.19	393
Baltimore, MD	0.28	662	Norfolk, VA	0.53	764
Bangor, ME	0.71	65	Oklahoma City, OK	1.11	1,067
Baton Rouge, LA	0.83	437	Omaha, NE	0.61	392
Boston, MA	0.16	506	Philadelphia, PA	0.21	1,035
Buffalo, NY	0.26	307	Phoenix, AZ	0.79	1,775
Charleston, SC	0.58	296	Pittsburgh, PA	0.36	866
Charlotte, NC	1.05	1,224	Portland, OR	0.60	908
Chicago, IL	0.24	1,813	Providence, RI	0.17	191
Cincinnati, OH	0.54	829	Raleigh, NC	1.17	1,005
Cleveland, OH	0.25	550	Richmond, VA	1.32	1,141
Columbia, SC	0.60	271	Riverside, CA	0.39	999