
LEARNING FROM NEGATIVE SPACE: CATEGORIZING SUCCESS IN ARTS POLICY ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Abstract

From its inception in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has counted on its agency leaders to operate as policy entrepreneurs – working to influence the federal public policy process and advocating for increased public arts funding. Policy entrepreneurship research has largely centered on success stories (Mintrom & Luetjens, 2017), but this does not provide a full picture of policy entrepreneurship. Kingdon (2003) argues that when policy entrepreneurship fails, so does their policy initiatives, but there has not been an investigation into policy entrepreneurship that fully defines and studies policy entrepreneurship failure in context. This investigation identifies three distinct areas where policy entrepreneurs can achieve success: agency leader, advocacy coalition manager, oppositional respondent. Through the lens of policy entrepreneurship with a focus specifically on rhetoric, this study assesses John Frohnmayer, NEA Chairman from 1989 to 1992, as a case of policy entrepreneurship failure. In looking at a case of unsuccessful policy entrepreneurship, this study furthers policy entrepreneurship theory and provide arts and cultural policy scholars with a more nuanced understanding of Frohnmayer’s time as Chairman of the NEA.

The creation of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965 pushed arts funding into the public policy arena to compete for attention and resources among other policy issues under the purview of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees – the governmental bodies responsible for determining the authorization and funding of the NEA. The existence of the NEA and the way that it has operated since its inception has prompted a number of investigations related to budgetary politics and fiscal support of the agency (Wyszomirski, 1988), how the agency has fared the appropriations process (Moen, 1997), and the language used in attempts to help the agency navigate both the times when it has enjoyed relative political favor and times when it has been under political attack (Saunders, 2005). While official leadership of the agency has been discussed in autobiographies (Alexander, 2001; Straight, 1979) and biographies of NEA Chairpersons (Straight, 1988), and investigated empirically (Wirgau, 2013), one area under-examined is the role of NEA Chairpersons as policy entrepreneurs.

Kingdon (2011) defined policy entrepreneurs as actors “in or out of government, in elected or appointed positions, in interest groups or research organizations. But their defining characteristic, as in the case of a business entrepreneur, is their willingness to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money – in the hope of a future return” (p. 122). Policy entrepreneurs work to “mobilize others in support” of their proposed policy initiatives (Mintrom & Luetjens, 2017, p. 4) in order to achieve positive policy outcomes in their policy area. In this case, a policy entrepreneur would be working to achieve continued and increased public arts funding at the federal level.

In order to accomplish their policy goals, policy entrepreneurs must work with advocacy coalitions and against oppositional advocacy coalitions. Advocacy coalitions are a collection of actors and actor groups that are in favor of the same proposed policy action and oppositional advocacy coalitions are those aligned against it. It is not necessary for those in either camp to agree with the rest of their respective coalition about the policy issue. In fact, it can be part of a policy entrepreneur's work to get an advocacy coalition to act as a cohesive unit, or they may choose to coordinate various factions of an advocacy coalition to work toward their policy goals (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). In the art policy context, the arts advocacy coalition is comprised of all artists, arts administrators, legislators, and members of the general public that support public arts funding. The issue of public arts funding has always been contentious, and even those who agree that public arts funding should exist can have widely varying opinions about how that funding should be disseminated (Brenson, 2001, p. 132-33). At any given time, different factions of an advocacy coalition can be vying for dominance within the coalition.

Various Chairpersons have been lauded as successfulⁱ agency leaders based on specific accomplishments on behalf of some facet or facets of the arts subgovernment during their tenure. Roger Stevens was commended for being a "natural leader" who was fair and "evenhanded" (Taylor & Barresi, 1984, pg. 55-56). Nancy Hanks was praised for her political acumen and relationship building with Congress, despite being one of the first NEA Chairs with the least amount of experience in Washington leading up to her tenure, (Zeigler, 1994, p. 68). Livingston Biddle was praised for his work to diversify further the art that was funded by the NEA in an effort to combat longstanding charges of elitism (Binkiewicz, 2004, p. 192). To date, the field of arts policyⁱⁱ has drawn important insights from success stories which have helped to shape the field's emerging theories and practices. However, focusing solely on instances of successful policy entrepreneurship highlights a single path to success, embedded in the conjectures and contexts of the times. Furthermore, success is too malleable in this instance. It can mean a variety of things. Not having a fixed definition of success prevents true learning and application across contexts. I assert that studying instances of policy entrepreneurship failure can provide just as much, if not more, insight into the nuances of the roles policy entrepreneurs can play. In line with the aforementioned assertion, this investigation asks the following: given the various audiences and needs present in the public policy arena, are there various ways to define policy entrepreneurship success? Additionally, given the importance placed upon rhetoric in policy entrepreneurship literature (Petridou et al., 2015), what specific insights can a rhetorical focus offer when looking at instances of policy entrepreneurship failure? These two research questions serve to further the field of policy entrepreneurship, which has begun to move beyond conceptualizations of policy entrepreneurship as "well-placed policy heroes with time on their side" (Mintrom & Luetjens, 2017, p. 4) and has improved theorization of policy entrepreneurs through investigations of these actors in context (Mintrom, 2013; Mintrom et al., 2014; Mintrom & Luetjens, 2017;

ⁱ In the policy arena, success is a relative term that often depends on who is in power at a given point in time. In order to ground the use of this work in the context of arts policy entrepreneurship, I use success to mean positive policy action from the vantage point of the NEA, those in favor of public arts funding at the federal level, and John Frohnmayer, specifically.

ⁱⁱ Here, I use the term arts policy to signify a focus on the policy issue of public arts funding in the United States. This is distinct from the term cultural policy, which is primarily used outside of the United States and is much more expansive in its policy considerations.

Verduijn, 2015). These questions also address Mintrom's (2015) call for the application of political entrepreneurship as an analytical lens in diverse contexts. While the issue of learning from policy entrepreneurship failure has been explored within the context of stem cell research (Mintrom, 2015), this has been done to demonstrate how policy entrepreneurs can "learn from failures and take new runs at securing policy change" (p. 103). My investigation expands upon this research by providing insights that can be applied across policy contexts and actors operating as policy entrepreneurs. To address my research questions, I look at the case of John Frohmayer's tenure as Chairman of the NEA. It is widely accepted that Frohmayer's tenure was a failure (Zeigler, 1994, p. 68). However, investigating Frohmayer's time as the agency's leader through the lens of policy entrepreneurship helps better articulate exactly why he was unsuccessful as a policy entrepreneur and elucidates paths to policy entrepreneurship success that are obscured by less nuanced definitions of success and failure in the public policy arena.

In this article, I first provide a brief overview of the NEA leading up to and outlining Frohmayer's tenure. In a review of the work of policy entrepreneurs, I emphasize the role of rhetoric, namely through the issue-framing process, as a crucial component of the path toward policy entrepreneurship success. This will help redefine previous agency leadership successes as a demonstration of the utility of this lens. After the theoretical discussion, I present my methodology – which allows for simultaneous consideration of the rhetoric of the policy entrepreneur and other actor groups operating within the same public policy spaces. Finally, I present Frohmayer's time as Chairman as an illustrative case that, through the articulation of how he failed as a policy entrepreneur, highlights how policy entrepreneurs can have varying types and degrees of success. They can be successful agency leaders, achieving their agency goals, successful coalition organizers, with rhetoric and rationales that create a broad and strong advocacy coalition, and they can be successful oppositional respondents, managing to avoid or mitigate the damage caused by an oppositional advocacy coalition.

Case Context: The Perfect Storm

During the push to create the NEA, and for the first few years of the agency's existence, many artists within the arts advocacy coalition were tentatively supportive of public arts funding. However, they were concerned with the issue of censorship and government control of the arts (Levy, 1997, p. 105). The practices of the agency, which was accused of favoring large, Eurocentric artistic institutions housed on the east and west coasts (Kester, 1998, p. 104) did not assuage these concerns. Two events occurred immediately prior to Frohmayer becoming chairman that caused him to inherit an arts advocacy coalition that had gone from splintered to fractured. The first incident occurred when a Washington, DC gallery canceled a show from controversial artist Robert Mapplethorpe unexpectedly, amid pressure from The American Family Association, an organization that represented the interests of the religious right. The second occurred when another artist, Serrano, sparked additional controversy with the religious right with his work entitled *Piss Christ*. The American Family Association was joined by the Southern Baptist Convention, the Eagle Forum, Concerned Women for America, and the 700 Club, forming a strong religious right coalition. Although the grants that indirectly supported two separate shows in which each artist was showcased were handled during Hodsoll's tenure, the controversy began gaining national attention as Hodsoll left his leadership position.

In addition to issues within the advocacy coalition framework, the oppositional advocacy coalition was experiencing a surge in political power. Critics of the agency within the arts policy landscape at the state and local levels, who called out the exclusionary dynamics of the agency's grantmaking processes during Hanks' tenure (Taylor & Barresi, 1984, p. 180) were gaining traction as influential leaders from various religious organizations, who mobilized members of the general public and members of Congress in both the House and the Senate in response to the two controversial grants. In the Senate, D'Amato (R-NY) and Helms (R-NC) coordinated efforts to get 39 Senators to sign a letter to the NEA expressing their outrage over Serrano's work. In the House of Representatives, Arme (R-TX) enlisted the support of 107 members of Congress to sign a letter denouncing the Serrano grant. Senator Helms went as far as to propose the Helms Amendment, which limited the types of art that could be funded and sought to marry the concepts of obscenity with indecency. This is significant in that the former is not protected by the First Amendment, while the latter is. Marrying them could lead to them being considered one and the same, and therefore not protected under the First Amendment. Despite calls for the abolishment of the NEA, the agency was able to continue its work with a \$45,000 cut to their budget. These cuts, known as the Stenholm Amendment, were the exact amount of the two grants involved in the Serrano and Mapplethorpe controversies. Although the entirety of these controversial events, from the granting of funds to the actual exhibition and initial backlash, occurred prior to Frohnmayer taking on the role of chair, the respective controversies caused by the NEA's indirect funding connection to the work of Serrano and Mapplethorpe significantly impacted Frohnmayer's time as chair from the moment of nomination.

Other controversial grant assignments had existed in the NEA's history, but they were handled relatively quickly – either by quickly defusing the situation with a swift and unwavering decision, a favored tactic of Livingston Biddle, or by deflection with a focus on the number of successes the agency had enjoyed over the years, which is how Nancy Hanks often handled similar situations. In Frohnmayer's nomination hearing, Senator Pell noted, "controversies have been few and far between, and each time, the Endowment has emerged unscathed, if not strengthened (Frohnmayer Confirmation, 1989, p. 3). However, in the case of Mapplethorpe and Serrano, the public and very controversial ways these two incidents were addressed, yet not truly resolved, caused old concerns about censorship to resurface.

In 1989, John Frohnmayer became the fifth Chairperson of the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) on the heels of a smooth nomination process (Gamarekian, 1989). In addition to experience as a lawyer, Frohnmayer served at the Oregon Arts Commission for eight years, four of those as chair. Additionally, Frohnmayer served as a peer reviewer for the NEA prior to his nomination. Each of the previous chairpersons was well-known in either elite artistic circles in the Northeast or as a Washington insider. The organization was fiscally stable at the time but was at risk of stalling out due to stalemate appropriations from Frohnmayer's predecessors.

Frohnmayer inherited an organization under political attack. At the onset of his tenure, Ronald Reagan assembled a task force, the Independent Commission, tacitly aimed at questioning the agency's governmental processes and funding pathways. Reagan's task force was part of a macro bureaucratic effort to economically streamline the government and cut costs within the federal government (Danziger & Haveman, 1981). However, this task force was also a response to Mapplethorpe and Serrano controversies, continued pressure from

members of the oppositional advocacy coalition operating within the legislature, and to mounting pressure coming from the aforementioned organizations representing the religious right. The group's concerns were summarized by Donald Wildmon (as quoted in Zeigler, 1994, p.76):

“What we are up against is not dirty words and dirty pictures. It is a philosophy of life which seeks to remove the influence of Christians and Christianity from our society. Pornography is not the the disease, but merely a visible symptom. It springs from a moral cancer in our society, and it will lead us to destruction if we are unable to stop it.”

In the eyes of the religious right, the NEA was a symbol of moral decay, and it was their duty to bring it down for the good of society.

In light of the Serrano and Mapplethorpe grants, Frohnmayer focused on avoiding further controversy. Against this backdrop, Frohnmayer's earliest initiatives as Chairman sought to divert attention from the ostensibly “risky” individual artists by driving policy change in the arena of arts education and rural access to the arts. Soon after becoming chair, he attempted to retract NEA funding from Artists' Space, a lower Manhattan gallery focusing on emerging artists, due to rumors that they would be mounting a show that both attacked certain political figures and featured provocative nude photos. The board of Artists' Space responded with a letter stating their refusal to return the funds (Bolton, 1992). Instead of quelling the issue, Frohnmayer's attempt to retract the grant further alienated the agency from artists and the arts constituency. In direct response, Leonard Bernstein, a famous conductor, refused the National Medal of Arts in protest. This act publicly embarrassed President George H.W. Bush and his wife, further alienating Frohnmayer from government supporters who had already distanced themselves from him. When he officially joined the NEA, Frohnmayer found the NEA disjointed and its staff low on morale. Attempts to hire staff members of Frohnmayer's choosing were met with admonishment or silence from presidential personnel (Frohnmayer, 1993), and he struggled to understand the agency practices and governmental norms that would get him the results he wanted. Additionally, Frohnmayer's attempts to reason with the evangelical community – including public appearances on CNN and other public media (Zeigler, 1994) where he openly discussed concerns with members of the American Family Association, a very vocal component of the oppositional advocacy coalition, were unsuccessful.

Administratively, Frohnmayer spent most of the time as chair dealing with the ramifications of the Helms amendment. Although the Helms amendment itself was not passed, language from that amendment was adopted into the NEA granting terms and conditions. The language prevented the agency from providing funds:

...to promote, disseminate or produce materials which ... may be considered obscene, including depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts and which, when taken as a whole, do not have serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value (Frohnmayer, 1993, p. 133).

Many in the arts community considered this a loyalty oath. As a direct result, organizations such as The American Poetry Review, Gettysburg Review, and the Paris Review rejected grants they were awarded because of the decency clause (Masters, 1990). The New School sued the NEA in 1990, seeking a ruling that would ban the NEA from asking grant recipients to sign a pledge of compliance that they would not engage in any obscene (Masters, 1990). The public embarrassment was subject to criticism from the media, artists, and the oppositional advocacy coalition. Indirectly, artists of the time reported a high level of tacit self-censorship as a result of the Helms amendment language (Walker, 1993, p. 937).

The most noted controversy of Frohnmayer's tenure was the "NEA Four." Four individual artistsⁱⁱⁱ filed lawsuits against Frohnmayer for revoking grants that had been approved by the NEA peer-review process, stating that their "indecent" content went against "obscenity clause" introduced into the NEA administrative purview as a compromise to the Helms Amendment (Zeigler, 1994). In the end, Frohnmayer's decision was upheld when the Supreme Court, under then-President Clinton, ruled that the NEA could, and should, consider decency standards when making granting decisions. This decision occurred six years after Frohnmayer was forced to resign. Winning in court, however, could not remedy the irrevocable damage to the arts advocacy coalition and its relationship with the agency.

The NEA managed to navigate the 1990 reauthorization process, despite attacks from both the arts constituency and the oppositional advocacy coalition. One of the biggest factors in the agency's ability to survive the reauthorization was the Independent Commission. This group, called for in the agency's 1990 appropriation legislation, was charged with "reviewing the National Endowment for the Arts grant-making procedures, including those of its panel system, and considering whether the standard for publicly funded art should be different than the standard for privately funded art" (The Independent Commission, 1990, p. 1). The individuals chosen to serve on the commission spanned the political ideological spectrum, were well-versed in the intersection of public policy and the arts, politically savvy, and capable of garnering bipartisan support^{iv}. The outcome of this process was four significant changes to the agency and the way it conducted business (*Effect of Last Year's NEA Reauthorization Process*, 1991). First, grant reviewers were supposed to assess grant applications through a lens of general-decency standards. Second, the percentage of NEA funds required to be set aside for state and local arts organizations was increased to a total of 35% to be passed along in FY93. Third, of any funds for the organization over \$175 million, 50 cents of each dollar must go toward education. Finally, to address charges of elitism among panelists, the peer-review process was altered to make panels more representative of the general public. While surviving reauthorization can be seen as a political win for the agency, the Independent Commission's work served to further erode the relationship between the agency and artists – who found the proposed changes to be a further attack on free speech rights of artists (Yasui, 1991). After reauthorization, other skirmishes between the agency, the oppositional advocacy coalition, and

ⁱⁱⁱ Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes, and Tim Miller

^{iv} Four members of the commission were from New York (Theresa Elmore Behrendi, Dr. John Brademas, Kitty Carlisle Harl, and Charles Kinsley McWhorter); two were from California (Peter Nicholas Kyros, Jr., and Rosalind Wiener Wyman); two were from Illinois (David E. Connor and Joan White Harris); and one each from New Mexico (Dr. John Thomas Agresio), Kansas (Marcia Laing Golden), West Virginia (Kay Huffman GoiKlwin), and the District of Columbia (Leonard Garment) (The Independent Commission, 1990, p. 1)

artists continued. Frohnmayer, under constant fire from the oppositional advocacy coalition and unable to unify the arts advocacy coalition and gain their support, was forced to resign after only two years as chair.

Initial assessments of Frohnmayer's tenure with the NEA simply painted the picture of an inept outsider who was not privy to the inner workings of the federal government (Zeigler, 1994). However, looking at Frohnmayer's tenure through the lens of policy entrepreneurship provides a much more nuanced reading of his time and highlights different types of policy entrepreneurship success that do not rely solely on whether or not specific legislation is passed.

Theoretical Approach

In order to account for a broad definition of policy entrepreneurship success and to highlight the role rhetoric plays in that context, this study overlays Kingdon's (2003) Policy Window/Multiple Streams framework, Baumgartner and Jones' (1999) Punctuated-Equilibrium Theory, and Sabatier's (2006) Advocacy Coalition Framework. While each of these theories has stood alone in other policy analyses and investigations, they work in tandem to assess the full complexity of the policy context. Each of these theories informs the literature on policy entrepreneurship and addresses the role of rhetoric in the work of policy entrepreneurship.

Kingdon's (2003; 2011) multiple streams (MS) framework separates the policymaking process into three distinct streams. The political stream is comprised of elements such as national mood, pressure group campaigns, administrative and legislative turnover, and politicians' interests. The problem stream is where issues are defined and brought into the policy arena. Finally, the policy stream is where issue definitions are analyzed and reconfigured by a community of concerned issue actors. The MS framework assumes that each stream flows independently of the others and that it is special work to get two or more of the streams to converge to create a policy window. A policy window is a narrow opportunity where policy change may occur. Policy windows can either be auspicious or inauspicious, depending on the reason the policy window opening. Much like the relative definition of success – the polarity of a policy window depends on your vantage point. Because I am looking specifically at John Frohnmayer, I view auspicious policy windows as ones that would benefit his organization and policy issue: public arts funding. Likewise, inauspicious policy windows are those that would threaten the NEA, public arts funding, and his role as the agency's leader.

This study investigates how Frohnmayer rhetorically navigated these streams. In the case of a potentially auspicious policy window, successful policy entrepreneurship would require Frohnmayer to use rhetoric to combine the three streams and create a window of opportunity for positive policy change. Conversely, if members of the oppositional advocacy coalition can combine the three streams, this would create an inauspicious policy window. In the event of an inauspicious policy window, success would entail Frohnmayer utilizing rhetoric to separate the streams or to mitigate the damage to his agency, his policy issue, and his authority as Chairman. This theory is particularly useful when looking at the role rhetoric plays in the work of a policy entrepreneur. While this theory is useful from a policy rhetoric perspective, its focus on whether or not a policy window occurs is too reliant upon outcomes and does not allow for more nuanced definitions of policy entrepreneurship success.

The *how* and *why* of a policy window opening dictates the specific set of entrepreneurial policy skills required to navigate and manage policy change successfully. Baumgartner and Jones' (1999) Punctuated-Equilibrium Theory complements Kingdon's (2003) framework by identifying data types and sources analysts can use to examine policy windows, regardless of their polarity. This theory indicates that looking at a fuller picture, which includes failures as well as successes, is important in understanding the work of policy change management (Howlett et al., 2017). Finally, Sabatier's (2006) Advocacy Coalition Framework focuses on the use of rhetoric employed by policy entrepreneurs to manage advocacy coalitions operating in favor of their policy issue as well as those operating in opposition. The Advocacy Coalition Framework has successfully been combined with the MS framework to provide complementary explanations for the policy change management of specific policy issues, and it serves the same purpose in this study (Meijerink, 2005).

Research Methodology

I used NVivo, qualitative data-analysis software developed by QSR, to conduct rhetorical analysis to track individual themes (e.g., artistic excellence, economic impact, geographic access) and how those themes occurred (e.g., metaphor, storytelling, synecdoche) by actor group (Advocacy Coalition, Chairman, Oppositional Advocacy Coalition, and Policymaker). I constructed my codebook by investigating arguments both in favor of and against public arts funding at the federal level between 1962 and 1968 (the years leading up to and including the start of the NEA). I then compared my codebook to that used in Strom and Cook's (2004) investigation of rationales used both for and against public arts funding at the federal level in the policy arena between 1965 and 2005, which was based on Kingdon's MS framework and successfully utilized in two other studies (Berkers, 2009; Toohey, 2007). I utilized Stone's (2002) *Policy Paradox* to construct my rhetorical strategy codebook. Stone (2002), working from a theoretical base closely aligned with my own, provided thorough investigations of symbols, the use of numbers, interest statements, and rhetorical strategies to track the evolution of issue definitions.

This approach accounts for the rhetorical dynamics of the main components of the arts subgovernment: the arts advocacy coalition, the oppositional advocacy coalition, John Frohnmayer, and policymakers during Frohnmayer's time at the NEA. In order to track the rhetoric I analyzed the following sources: three confirmation hearings, NEA annual and research reports released during Frohnmayer's tenure, appropriations hearings for the two years Frohnmayer was a part of the proceedings (FY90 and FY91), the 1990 Independent Commission report, and the Reauthorization Hearings. Newspaper coverage was particularly important during this time, by Frohnmayer's time as Chairperson, news about the NEA was covered beyond the arts section. I also analyzed interviews, personal letters between members of the arts subgovernment, editorials from newspapers, and print advertisements by various members of the subgovernment during Frohnmayer's time as Chairman. Finally, I analyzed Frohnmayer's account of time at the NEA, *Leaving Town Alive: Confessions of an Arts Warrior* (1993) through the policy entrepreneurship lens to include the narrative perspective of the policy entrepreneur as context. I investigated each argument from these sources based on a series of questions that I constructed to reflect best practices in advocacy coalition building (Sabatiér, 2007).

Findings

Based on the policy entrepreneurship lens, I determined three areas where policy entrepreneurs may achieve success: agency leader, coalition manager, and opposition respondent. Here, I present my findings in these three areas – demonstrating Frohnmayer’s failed policy entrepreneurship by analyzing his rhetoric in the formal policy arena as well as his rhetorical interactions with the arts advocacy coalition and the oppositional advocacy coalition.

Agency Leadership

According to statements made in the confirmation hearing and Frohnmayer’s book, he wished to focus on art education and rural arts access (Frohnmayer Confirmation, 1989; Frohnmayer, 1993). However, Frohnmayer presented seven different rationales for public arts funding during his time as Chairman: access, intrinsic value, art education, artistic quality, economic impact, industry comparison (comparing the plight of the arts sector to those in education and other social industries), and U.S. image abroad. This is a large number of rationales to be presented in the short time that Frohnmayer was chair, especially since his stated agency agenda was fairly concise. Based on the policy entrepreneurship literature, it is expected that a policy entrepreneur with a clear agenda would narrow their rhetorical focus (Edelman, 2013). Frohnmayer found it difficult to further his agency agenda, even during his confirmation hearing. When the conversation strayed into Frohnmayer’s desires for the agency, a member of Congress always brought the conversation back to the issue of NEA processes and accountability to the public (Senate Committee on Human Resources, 1989). In a tight rhetorical space, like the one Frohnmayer experienced, policy entrepreneurs usually use that limited space to focus on a small number of advocacy arguments strategically chosen to garner the most agreement and support from policymakers and their advocacy coalition (Mio, 2018). The choice to introduce seven different arguments, none of which directly align with any of the three main arguments (censorship, freedom, and access^v) presented by the arts advocacy coalition demonstrates a lack of policy entrepreneurship awareness and an inability to rhetorically navigate the policy arena to further his policy agenda.

Instead of rallying support for his stated agency goals of arts education and rural arts access, Frohnmayer spent his time reacting to crises stemming from the artists’ faction of the arts advocacy coalition and the oppositional advocacy coalition. The controversial acts of many artists who had received media attention were mentioned repeatedly throughout appropriations hearings during Frohnmayer’s tenure. Frohnmayer’s attempt to rhetorically situate rural arts access and arts education in politically favorable ways did not gain traction among policymakers – who forced Frohnmayer to focus on accountability reactively. Additionally, Frohnmayer’s arguments shifted based on his context. When dealing with the arts advocacy coalition and the oppositional advocacy coalition, Frohnmayer focused on *access*, *intrinsic value*, and *arts education*. When in the policy arena dealing with policymakers Frohnmayer’s top three rationales were *access*, *accountability*, and *quality*. Access was the only argument

^v The arts advocacy coalition focused on *access* as a critique of the NEA’s funding processes – meaning lack of access to public arts funding for many marginalized artists. This is distinct from Frohnmayer’s focus on rural arts access for the general public.

that Frohnmayer used consistently across audiences – unfortunately, Frohnmayer’s attempts to further his agency goal of rural access did not align with the rest of the arts subgovernment’s focus on access to arts funding for a more diverse pool of artists and arts organizations. Frohnmayer’s shift in focus from intrinsic value and arts education to accountability and quality meant that his agency agenda was not strategically expressed across actors. The outcome was a disjointed attempt to focus on his agency agenda that did not resonate with policymakers focus on avoiding additional controversy. Frohnmayer’s policy entrepreneurship failure in this area saw the agency unable to make significant advancements in the areas of rural access and arts education. This is not to say that there was no agency presence in those areas at all – there was just no marked difference in agency action in these areas during Frohnmayer’s tenure.

Coalition Management

The arts advocacy coalition consisted of arts educators, arts managers, individual artists, arts service organizations, and general arts advocates. As a whole, the arts advocacy coalition focused on three main concepts: anti-censorship, artistic freedom, and access. While the concentrated number of advocacy arguments suggests a unified advocacy coalition, low word frequency findings demonstrate a lack of coherence among the arts constituency in their attempts to justify or discuss these issues.

Artists employed arguments and rhetorical strategies that differed significantly from strategies deployed by the rest of the coalition – demonstrating splinters within the arts advocacy coalition. During Frohnmayer’s tenure the arts advocacy coalition fell into a loose pool of disparate concerns and priorities. In the arts advocacy coalition, artists were primarily concerned with artistic freedom and the ability to receive grant funds regardless of how the general public perceived their art. Arts administrators and others working in and representing arts institutions, on the other hand, wanted to avoid losing grant funding and support from the general public based on the actions of some artists. The artist faction of the arts consistency focused primarily on censorship with artistic freedom being a related secondary concern. Other parts of the coalition were more politically strategic, focusing on artistic freedom and, to a much lesser extent, access to the arts through ethos-building tactics. Organizations like the Association for Independent Film and Video called for organized campaigns to advocate for public arts funding throughout the artistic controversies. They encouraged an approach based on logic and technical information, such as public support of arts research (Bolton, 1992, p. 206). Other arts advocates called on the general public to review the legislation being proposed and methodically outlined the detriment that censorship would cause. However, artists targeting specific members of Congress and the oppositional advocacy coalition with pathos-driven aggressive messaging were granted more media coverage.

Table 1 shows the differences between Frohnmayer and the arts advocacy coalition at the start of Frohnmayer’s tenure. Although access showed up as one of the top three rationales from Frohnmayer and the arts constituency, they each focused on different aspects of the access argument. Frohnmayer was concerned with rural access, whereas the arts constituency focused on access to NEA funding for women and minorities. Despite this minor overlap, the concerns of the chair did not match those of the arts constituency at the start of this tenure. There was the potential for overlap with intrinsic value and artistic freedom, as parts of the arts

constituency based their artistic-freedom argument on intrinsic values, but the connection was not explicit.

Table 1 Frohnmayr's and the Arts Advocacy Coalition's Initial Rationale Preferences

Rationale Rank	John Frohnmayr	Arts Advocacy Coalition
1st	Access (Geographic)	Artistic Freedom
2nd	Accountability	Anti-censorship
3rd	Intrinsic Value	Access (Women & Minority Artists)

Table 2 provides an assessment of the advocacy arguments stemming from the arts advocacy coalition during Frohnmayr's tenure.

Table 2. Arts Advocacy Coalition Argument Scorecard

Argument Assessment Element	Argument		
	Anticensorship	Artistic Freedom	Access
Does the argument address the concerns of multiple parts of the advocacy coalition?	No	Yes	No
Does the argument address the concerns of the general public?	No	Yes	No
Does the argument address concerns in the oppositional advocacy coalition?	Yes	Yes	No
Does the argument have connections with other, politically salient arguments?	No	No	No
Is the argument multifaceted?	No	No	Yes

From a consensus building perspective, the arguments stemming from the arts constituency were neither cohesive nor strong. These arguments only took into account the desires of artists

and arts organizations to the exclusion, and often alienation, of members of the general public. The number of controversial artworks and their media coverage, coupled with these arguments, shifted the way the general public felt about artists and public arts funding. At a time of heightened public attention, the arts advocacy coalition was not making it a point to make enticing or politically salient arguments to the general public about their most popular benefit, public access to the arts.

A policy entrepreneur inheriting a strong arts advocacy coalition would only need to plug into pre-existing advocacy rhetoric and maintain equilibrium within the coalition, while a policy entrepreneur inheriting a weak, yet cohesive coalition would need to formulate new advocacy rhetoric that maintained the group's cohesion (Rocheffort & Cobb, 1994; Baumgartner & Jones, 2002). Given the lack of cohesion within the arts advocacy coalition, successful policy entrepreneurship in this area would require consensus building. Relative success in this area would include some combination of neutralizing factions of the arts advocacy coalition working against his efforts and banning together with the factions of the arts advocacy coalition whose goals for public arts funding and the NEA were in alignment with his.

Frohnmayr stated his aspiration to repair the arts advocacy coalition before his official start date as Chair (Frohnmayr Confirmation Hearing, 1989, p. 6), but he did not explicitly outline tactics. Frohnmayr employed seven distinct rationales for the arts, while the rest of the arts advocacy coalition used only three. Frohnmayr's top three rationales were *access*, *intrinsic value*, and *arts education*. The only commonality is access, but Frohnmayr defined access from an audience perspective while the arts advocacy coalition defined access from a funding perspective. This lack of common arguments and lack of cohesion, which was present at the start of Frohnmayr's tenure, continued throughout his time as chair. Frohnmayr's advocacy arguments did not mirror or complement any of the discordant intra-coalition priorities of the arts advocacy coalition. During his tenure, Frohnmayr stayed consistent with the rhetoric started at the onset of his time as Chair, never altering his arguments to bring them more in alignment with rhetoric stemming from any faction of the arts advocacy coalition. This instance of policy entrepreneurship failure prevented Frohnmayr from having a support base that could be utilized to help him achieve policy entrepreneurship success in other areas. Due to the inner turmoil in the arts constituency, compounded by some of Frohnmayr's actions and decisions, he was unable to either build or strengthen the advocacy coalition: "having made the decision to reject the four performance artists, I became the object of the vitriol of both the left and the right" (Frohnmayr, 1993, p. 178). By failing to organize and focus his arguments in ways that aligned with or complemented arts advocacy coalitions' argumentation strategies, Frohnmayr failed to mobilize a splintered coalition.

Oppositional Respondent

Legislative members of the arts advocacy coalition understood the political climate into which Frohnmayr would enter. At his confirmation hearing, congresspeople mentioned the fact that the agency was under attack by the oppositional advocacy coalition and public interest groups on 20 separate occasions. From "recent unpleasantness" (Frohnmayr Confirmation Hearing, 1989, p. 1), to "controversy" (p. 38), the publicity concerning Serrano and Mapplethorpe was in the forefront of policymaker's minds. It was clear to them than an inauspicious policy window was, if not already opened, a likely possibility. A series of

concepts that would frame his tenure emerged: Congress universally used the word *oversight* to define the role that the NEA should play in order to demonstrate accountability to taxpayers, while *intrusion* was used in lieu of *government control* or censorship. The importance of maintaining the *integrity* of the agency was also noted repeatedly, as policymakers did not want to be seen as promoting government control at the expense of artistic freedom.

Table 3 assess the advocacy argument from the oppositional advocacy coalition during Frohmayer’s tenure. During this time the oppositional advocacy coalition’s arguments were: “*bad art*,” *accountability*, and *no need*.

Table 3: Argument scorecard for the rationales used by the oppositional advocacy coalition throughout Frohmayer’s tenure.

Argument Assessment Element	Argument		
	Bad Art	Accountability	No Need
Does the argument address the concerns of multiple parts of the advocacy coalition?	No	Yes	No
Does the argument address the concerns of the general public?	No	Yes	No
Does the argument address concerns in the arts advocacy coalition?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Does the argument have connections with other, politically salient arguments?	Yes	Yes	No
Is the argument multifaceted?	Yes	No	No

Unlike the arts advocacy coalition, rhetoric across actors within the oppositional advocacy coalition was consistent, indicating a well-organized and cohesive advocacy coalition. They

defined art they deemed obscene or blasphemous as “bad art.” Having the works of Serrano and Mapplethorpe as concrete examples helped inflame a growing and increasingly vocal religious right. This argument was a direct challenge to longstanding values of quality and seal of approval upon which the NEA was founded (Mark, 1991). This argument was often used to directly address the general public, letting people know about the “vile content of [their] tax-funded material” (Bolton, 1992, p. 123), “photographs too vulgar to print” (Bolton, 1992, p. 124), and “pornographic, anti-Christian ‘works of art’” (Bolton, 1992, p. 150). The oppositional advocacy coalition then rallied around the bad-art argument and furthered it by stating that public dollars should not be used to support obscene or offensive art. Arguing that artists should be held accountable to taxpayers, the oppositional advocacy coalition brought additional members of the general public into its ranks. They also resurrected arguments from the 1960s, when the NEA was being conceptualized, that placed the arts in a market context. Arguing that artists should be able to make a living working in the same capitalist structure in which businesses operate played into the growing fiscal conservatism with Congress and among the general public. Overall, the oppositional advocacy coalition presented a unified set of arguments with consistent language. Although their arguments were not designed to win over members of the arts constituency, they were able to reach some members of Congress and increase their political power.

Success as an oppositional respondent requires policy entrepreneurs to defend the agency and their agency goals through deflection and mitigation of negative impact that could be caused by any successes achieved by the oppositional advocacy coalition. The strong, cohesive oppositional advocacy coalition which was organized and strategic about gaining support from Congress and the general public was difficult for Frohnmayer to combat.

Frohnmayer was unable to successfully deflect attacks from the oppositional advocacy coalition with his main argument tactic: avoidance. When possible, Frohnmayer avoided the topic of the various artistic controversies and the oppositional advocacy coalition’s growing political power. At times he appeared to be making attempts to deflect attacks. For example, Frohnmayer consistently drew the conversation to art education and the desire to see access to the arts continue to increase during the nomination hearing. He employed an “intrinsic values of the arts” rationale, buttressed mainly by arts education rationales, to argue for more funding and resources - even though controversy over some NEA policies were already a prominent concern among policymakers. Arguments such as “the arts help children to understand civilization, try various approaches to problem-solving, use intuition as well as reason, and develop the discipline required for success in life,” (NEA, 1989, p. vii) did not land well outside the policy arena when deployed in response to charges of publicly funded pornographic art (Bolton, 1990, p. 180). Sometimes, Frohnmayer was forceful – such as in his correspondence with Art Space where he requested that they return their NEA funds (Bolton, 1990, p. 125):

“Artists Space should relinquish the Endowment’s grant for [your] exhibition. Additionally, please employ the following disclaimer in appropriate ways to correct the misapprehension of our support for this exhibition: ‘The National Endowment for the Arts has not supported this exhibition or its catalogue.’”

At other times, Frohnmayer appeared to be conceding and undermining his agency. For example, in his response to the New York Shakespeare Festival’s refusal of an NEA grant where Frohnmayer referred to the obscenity clause as “not one of our asking nor one which I

thought necessary” (Bolton, 1990, p. 173). Even Frohnmayer admitted often being unsure of how to handle difficult situations and that he was undecided about staying at the agency even before he was asked to resign (Frohnmayer, 1993, p. 247-250).

As previously mentioned, the arts advocacy coalition had alienated some members of Congress and members of the general public leaving an advocacy vacuum that the oppositional advocacy coalition stepped into, gaining momentum and popularity (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). In choosing to focus on *access*, and *art education* at a time when the oppositional advocacy coalition was gaining momentum focusing on arguments resonating with policymakers and their constituents, Frohnmayer failed to construct politically salient advocacy arguments that directly undermined the oppositional advocacy coalition.

Frohnmayer’s Tenure: The Aftermath

Arts advocates in the policy arena thought that Frohnmayer’s background in both religion and law would be useful in combating attacks from the religious right and conservative policymakers. Ultimately, his failure to leverage the skills of policy entrepreneurship toward coalition building prevented Frohnmayer from forming strategic alliances with policymakers and the arts constituency. Frohnmayer’s failure to find coalition management success prohibited him from organizing a successful defense against further attacks from the oppositional advocacy coalition and antagonistic or retaliatory actions from the arts constituency. As a result of these two types of policy entrepreneurship failure, Frohnmayer was ultimately unsuccessful in the policy entrepreneurship goal of agency leadership.

Agency efforts were predominantly spent defending the agency and public arts funding. Defensively making a case for public arts funding in the face of potential agency elimination is distinctly different from proactively making a case for the arts to increase or strengthen an existing advocacy coalition. Frohnmayer’s attempts to steer the conversation away from artistic freedom and obscene art controversies toward geographic access and art education were unsuccessful with policymakers. Frohnmayer was forced to resign only two years into the job (Frohnmayer, 1993). This was the final confirmation of his overall failure to harness the power of policy entrepreneurship.

As a result of the NEA 4 case, one of the larger artist-based controversies during Frohnmayer’s tenure (Zeigler, 1994), the agency was restricted from giving out any additional grants to individual artists except in the areas of Literature and Jazz. From the agency’s and arts constituents’ vantage point, this was not an optimal resolution to censorship concerns that had persisted since the agency’s creation. State Arts Agency leaders, realizing that there was an opportunity for increased power and resources, collectively called for restriction of the NEA’s autonomy, which would increase theirs (Gamarekian, 1990b). As a result, they enjoyed increased federal allocation percentages and operational autonomy; a demonstration of lost political control and agency autonomy for the NEA.

As the head of a federal agency, Frohnmayer’s lack of policy entrepreneurship success in the policy arena would normally result in dire consequences for the agency. However, an alternative to Frohnmayer’s leadership presented itself with the Independent Commission that was charged with investigating the granting processes of the NEA in response to the Serrano and Mapplethorpe granting controversies (The Independent Commission, 1990). This group provided some of the characteristics of a successful policy entrepreneur by focusing on

procedural changes that garnered bipartisan support. The Commission also leveraged the support of policymakers and the less controversial factions of the arts advocacy coalition by displaying both “technical feasibility and value acceptance” (Burgess, 2006, p. 123). The Independent Commission Report was used extensively to assist with the Reauthorization of the NEA. This report, especially during this time of controversy and disarray for the agency, helped ward off agency consequences such as closing the agency, complete defunding, or folding of the agency into another federal institution or structure that are common in instances of policy entrepreneurship failure (Burgess, 2006).

Conclusion: Lessons Learned

My research demonstrates a method for systematically investigating policy entrepreneurs in ways that are more nuanced than simply relying on appropriations amounts or agency autonomy. I offer three different types of policy entrepreneurship success and provide additional insight into exactly why Frohnmayer was considered a failure in the policy arena. My analysis does not argue for a fundamental change in the perception of Frohnmayer as an agency leader and policy entrepreneur. Instead, it offers an additional understanding of the specific ways in which agency leaders can manage policy change or orchestrate purposeful policy equilibrium in service to their agency and their agency agenda.

Frohnmayer’s time as chair was notorious due to the widespread perception that he was unable to gain significant allies in the arts subgovernment and was a “political liability” (Wyszomirski, 1995, p. 13). My investigation uncovers critical nuance beneath this perception. This study demonstrates the importance of policy entrepreneurs figuring out how to rhetorically mirror or complement their advocacy coalition. Even when the advocacy coalition appears to be completely at odds with agency leaders, success in coalition management requires finding common rhetorical ground – whether it is with the advocacy coalition in its entirety, or with a curated faction of the coalition.

This study utilizes a policy entrepreneurship lens to assess Frohnmayer’s abilities as a policy entrepreneur. This lens focuses on the rhetoric of dominant actors within the arts subgovernment. Arguably, given the systemic processes of oppression that exists throughout the public policy arena, “dominant actors” could also be read as privileged or a proxy for White, Eurocentric, and predominantly male (Carnes, 2013; Naff, 2001; Novkov, 2008). A full investigation of Frohnmayer, and any Chairperson of the NEA, should include an analysis of their policy entrepreneurship in relation to marginalized voices. My study focused on data from the policy arena, newspapers and agency documents alongside an analysis of Frohnmayer’s memoir of his time as Chairman. While this focus does not provide a full analysis, my methods do provide a more robust analysis than was previously available and lays the groundwork for analysis of policy entrepreneurs that is inclusive of, or even focuses on, marginalized voices. Rushton (2003) has already investigated the inadequacies of economic analysis when investigating public arts funding through a multicultural^{vi} lens. Further work to conduct policy analysis on public arts funding can and should determine theoretical lenses and methods that explicitly incorporate and champion traditionally marginalized voices to counter the longstanding practices of silencing them.

^{vi} This was the term used in the citation.

By defining three distinct avenues for policy entrepreneurship success – agency leader, advocacy coalition manager, and oppositional respondent – my work suggests that a policy entrepreneur may find success in one area without necessarily achieving success in another. Cases where a policy entrepreneur is successful in one area (e.g., is a successful agency leader), without finding success in the other two areas (e.g., as an advocacy coalition manager or oppositional respondent) can provide more field-building information about policy entrepreneurship in context. The findings of this investigation suggest an ideal ordering of achieving policy entrepreneurship success. Successful coalition management can provide a base of support to help policy entrepreneurs achieve success as an oppositional respondent. Success as an advocacy coalition manager and oppositional respondent can then lead to an easier path toward achieving agency leadership success. There is potential for additional theory-building and testing when looking at differences in policy entrepreneurship success or failure, and varying degrees of those successes and failures (e.g., initiating large-scale policy change vs. smaller-scale policy change) in times of policy punctuation and equilibrium.

The more nuanced aspects of this study raise some additional questions for investigation. Because Frohnmayer’s case involved the general public in ways not common for an agency like the National Endowment for the Arts, the amount of public attention may make this case special. Data regarding the involvement of the general public as a negative audience or compounded context suggest that policy entrepreneurs should focus on issue management in the smaller context of the subgovernment to avoid needing to respond to a large-scale crisis in a time of punctuation. For example, concerns over censorship and the “appropriate” types of art for government funding existed within the arts constituency in the time leading up to the creation of the NEA and remained a concern throughout Frohnmayer’s tenure. If this issue were addressed when it was only a concern in the arts constituency, perhaps the space for controversy, which reached its peak during the Frohnmayer case, would not have existed in the same way. In addition to causing rifts among arts advocates, the continued existence of the same policy concern may have been a causal factor in creating conditions that encouraged the oppositional advocacy coalition.

This investigation was successful in that the steps I took did provide the information necessary to make a more nuanced assessment of Frohnmayer’s failure as a policy entrepreneur than has been offered by others discussing arts policy entrepreneurship. This led to additional insights about policy entrepreneurs in general, offering alternative definitions of success that better reflect the three main facets of policy entrepreneurship work for agency leaders operating in the policy arena. By incorporating all facets of the arts subgovernment, my assessment acknowledges that agency leaders do not operate in a vacuum. They must operate in their specific political context, which includes oppositional advocacy coalitions of varying strengths, policy arenas that house amenable or hostile policymakers, and a supportive or antagonistic advocacy coalition. My methods take into account those possibilities and include means of identifying and assessing various political contexts.

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