

7-1-2007

Framing the culture wars: a content analysis of news media coverage of the Mapplethorpe and Brooklyn Museum art controversies

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THE ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

FRAMING THE CULTURE WARS:

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE

OF THE MAPPLETHORPE AND BROOKLYN MUSEUM ART CONTROVERSIES

By

AMY L. HOLOWCZENKO

A paper submitted

in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science degree

in Communication & Media Technologies

Degree Awarded:

Summer Quarter, 2007

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated in memory of my mom, Louise Mae Sudore. Although her unsuccessful battle against cancer prevented her from seeing the completion of my thesis and degree, she was my motivation to be strong and persevere in my personal, professional, and academic life. I aspire to live my life as the way she did: full of happiness, creativity, and surrounded by loved ones.

Acknowledgments

This thesis could not have been completed without the generosity and support of many people, of which whose contributions are nearly impossible to fully acknowledge. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the scores of educators, colleagues, friends, family, and individuals who has provided assistance on this arduous, but rewarding journey.

First, I would like to thank my mentor and graduate advisor, Dr. Rudy Pugliese. Dr. Pugliese provided invaluable advice and guidance in my thesis research and my academic career, encouraging me to pursue my dreams and instilling in me the confidence necessary to attain my professional goals. I enjoyed working with him and felt inspired by his excellent scholarship, personal charisma, and friendship.

I am enormously grateful to my committee members: Dr. Rudy Pugliese, Dr. Bruce Austin, and Professor Loret Steinberg who guided me through the process of writing this thesis. Their time and attention devoted to me and my research is appreciated. Dr. Austin was particularly instrumental in my research, providing constructive critiques and editorial advice along the way. His extensive knowledge and dedication to education, his students, and the communication field is inspiring and admirable. Loret's enthusiasm and shared passion for the arts fostered an intellectually stimulating and creative environment in which to work and learn. Her contribution was an indispensable part of this thesis.

Professional and academic colleagues and friends provided a well spring of inspiration. Fellow graduate students, especially Michelle Wescott, have been my support system throughout my educational career. I am indebted to Michelle for her unselfish and generous help throughout the coding process of my thesis. Her time and attention to my research, as well as her friendship are invaluable.

Special recognition goes to my employer, Kathryn D'Amada. She provided me the time and resources that allowed me to complete my education and thesis in a timely manner. Her words of encouragement and sound advice were an important source of support.

I wish to give my heart-felt thanks to my family. Without the sustained support and love I would have not finished my degree. Always making me feel like I can achieve anything, their faith in me kept me going during times I thought I could not. They continue to be my ultimate source of energy and motivation and I appreciate everything they have done for me.

Finally, I am eternally indebted to my husband, Mark Holowczenko. For the last four years, he has gone to great lengths to make sure I had the time to achieve my goals. I want to thank him for holding our lives together during a time when mine was consumed with work. I cannot thank him enough for the sacrifices he had made throughout my educational pursuits and for caring for me all this time.

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Abstract

News media play an important role in presenting issues and themes central to art controversies. Evidence suggests that media frame issues, use agenda setting techniques, and increase coverage on art controversies. Using the Brooklyn Museum and Mapplethorpe controversies, this study sought to understand why the events became newsworthy, what frames were used, and what differences were present in the news stories. News articles related to the controversies published between January 1, 1987 and December 31, 2006 in the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Columbus Dispatch* were content analyzed to measure prominence of theme, presentation of issues, frequency of news coverage, and reported causes. Comparisons made across the publications and time revealed significant differences in the portrayals.

Introduction

Nationally, the visual arts have provided the most highly publicized conflicts, pitting representatives of organized religion against art institutions and grant makers (Arthurs & Wallach, 2001). Among the most notable and highly publicized art conflicts of the twentieth century were the Mapplethorpe and Brooklyn Museum controversies. The widely publicized “culture wars” over public funding for the visual arts issues created by the Mapplethorpe and Brooklyn Museum controversies during the late 1980’s and 1990’s propelled a decade of art controversies fought in the political and media arenas. Prior to this period, other art controversies had not been viewed as social problems until they received significant media attention in the wake of news coverage of the Mapplethorpe and Brooklyn Museum controversies.

The events surrounding the Mapplethorpe and Brooklyn Museum controversies involved religious leaders, political factions, and arts community members who took advantage of varying access to the media to engage the public in debates over using public funds to subsidize exhibitions of controversial works of art. What was most notable about these controversies, however, is that they involved the public’s participation in protests and political and social debates that were highly publicized by the media who portrayed the differing opinions and the exchange of dialogue between the groups.

Interestingly enough, it may have not been the events themselves that made the incidents memorable; rather it was the media news coverage of the art controversies that made the incidents newsworthy. According to Fico & Drager (2001) the public’s curiosity

about art controversies encourages public discourse and news coverage of conflicts helps illuminate problems, stimulate political actions, and crystallize policy and voting decisions. McLeod and MacKenzie (1998) contend that art controversies attract the attention of the media and the public and that when the public learns of the controversies it is the result of increased media coverage. Repetitive coverage of art controversies, particularly those involving alleged obscene works of art, has resulted in what may appear to be increased public awareness and interest in public funding for the arts.

The News Media's Role in Art Controversies

News coverage of art controversies is not a contemporary phenomenon. As far back as November 12, 1887 (Beisel, 1993), the *New York Times* had been reporting on the controversy over gallery owner Robert Knoedler's arrest for selling photographic reproductions of female nudes (Clapp, 1972) and was widely publicized in virtually every New York City newspaper (Beisel, 1993). Offering differing views on art controversy issues in a fair and balanced manner, the media reach is extensive and affects all of society. According to Zembylas (2004) the potential public concern created by the presence of media ultimately exerts massive pressure on political decision makers (and on the courts), which could possibly affect the outcome of art controversies. Shapiro and Chock (2004) concur stating that the mass media are influential to the extent that they are able to provide information that resolves ambiguity.

Patterson (1980) maintains that many scholars, mainstream news outlets, and media pundits have documented a steady decrease in public trust of the media over the past three decades. Growing concern about news media credibility has caused the public to distrust the press and be suspicious of the content they are exposed to, deciding what to believe and what not to believe for themselves (Kiouisis, 2002). Cumulatively, the media's pursuit for sensationalistic, cynical, and horse-race stories may incline citizens to become disenchanted with the media and refrain from participating in civic life altogether (Kiouisis, 2002).

News Framing

Cohen (1963) maintains that media do not tell the audience what to think, but rather what to think about. Research on the nature of news framing and agenda setting, however are contradictory to this notion, indicating that contemporary media is influential and may be persuasive in telling us what to think. Despite the volume of information propelling the importance of an issue, researchers have suggested that it is possible that how the media portrays a topic can alter public opinion and perception of the issue, hence its importance. Many modes of public opinion suggest that presentation of issues in the media plays an important role in shaping the attitudes of the public (McClosky & Zaller, 1984). Shoemaker and Reese (1990) believe that media impose their own organizational, institutional, and ideological logic on information, shaping it into a product that offers a specific view of social reality.

As major sources of cultural production and information, news media portray public issues to provide explanations, descriptions, and frame issues so the public may better comprehend why issues are important and why events occur. Framing defines the boundaries of the debate by placing the issue within a certain sphere of meaning (Kruse, 2001). Providing the media with opportunity to shape an issue before it is presented to its audience, framing can unintentionally change public opinion about an issue. Scholars argue that newspapers selectively report events (“selection bias”) or that they erroneously report information on events they cover (“description bias”) (McCarthy, McPhail, & Smith, 1996). Evidence of framing controversial issues can be seen in news media presentations

of protests (Boyle, McCluskey, McLeod, & Stein, 2005; McLeod, 1995), and war (Taylor, 1992), suggesting that issues with higher degrees of social conflict have a greater chance of receiving increased coverage.

Scholars have identified at least five different ways the news media can frame issues or events (a) conflict, (b) personalization, (c) values, (d) consequences, and (e) responsibility (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). Either inclusive or exclusive, frames are constructed by news journalists by selecting what is written, as well as what is not written, by what and who is quoted and what and who is not quoted, and by which themes are and are not presented. By framing an event in specific context, the writer instructs the reader as to what is or is not significant. According to Ryan and Sim (1990) while the effects of framing may not be as dramatic as the rise and fall of a social movement or a political candidate, the public's perception are nevertheless shaped.

Agenda Setting

Increased presence of art controversy stories in the media may be explained by agenda setting. Implicit in many accounts of agenda setting is the idea that, the more coverage an issue receives, the further up the agenda it supposedly moves. Comprised of two levels of transmission, object and attribute salience, agenda setting is reliant on how media and their sources elect to frame certain aspects of an issue, making them more appealing in order to promote certain ideas and values. While the agenda setting concept attempts to explain why an issue may become important to the public due to its increased presence in the media, it also concentrates on the variation of news coverage of an issue, how issues emerge and evolve over time, and how the media conceptualize the issue. Prior research has shown that the typical newsworthiness indicators (timeliness; proximity; importance; impact on consequence; conflict or controversy; sensationalism; prominence, and novelty; oddity; or the unusual) may be broken down into three general theoretical dimensions of newsworthiness: the deviance dimension is composed of novelty/oddity/unusual (statistical deviance), prominence (normative deviance), sensationalism (normal or pathological deviance) and conflict or controversy (normative deviance) (Shoemaker, Danielian & Brendlinger, 1991).

Anyone can reasonably presume that events that occur on a daily basis may or may not be newsworthy, with some issues receiving extensive coverage, prominence in presentation, as well as placement in a printed publication because of its significance. Although art controversies remain an important social issue, news coverage is not

devoted to all art controversies, nor are all the details of a controversy presented to the public. According to Wanta, Golan and Lee (2004), agenda setting implies deeper, more thorough processing of information in media content. Journalists and editors not only have to transcribe events into objective and reasonably accurate portrayals, but must also determine which issues interest the public and which issues are significant enough to receive coverage.

There is a growing reason to believe that media create and reinforce stereotypical attributes and help set the political agenda for the American public and policy makers (Gans, 1979). Gans (1979) believes that the media do not always take the public officials' perspective (indeed, they often seek to uncover mismanagement and misconduct) but they typically allow politicians and government officials to set the agenda regarding the issues that are covered. Echoing these sentiments, Cwalina and Falkowski (2005) believe that the mass media have moved into the center of all social processes and have begun to construct the public sphere and the opinions of world politicians.

Furthermore, Zembylas (2004) maintains that unequal access of conflicting parties to the media public, due to the absence of shared information, and the different resources that can be mobilized in each case, has decisive influence on the formation of public opinion that determines the outcome of a conflict. Ball-Rokeach and DeFluer (1998) concur, stating that people tend to be more influenced by media when they have few other sources of information available to them. Public awareness of news stories on

art controversies therefore is contingent upon the frequency of news coverage, story features, and its newsworthiness.

Using the Brooklyn Museum and Robert Mapplethorpe controversies as case studies, the purpose of this content analysis is to examine media coverage of the art controversies to gain a better understanding of why they become newsworthy events, to discover what frames may have been used in the news media's portrayal of the art controversies, and to determine whether significant difference or similarities in the content of the news stories exist.

Research Questions

The concepts of framing and agenda setting led to the research questions, which ask:

1. What differences are there in the prominence of themes in news coverage of art controversies in the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Columbus Dispatch* during 1987-2006?
2. How has the frequency of news coverage of identical art controversies changed in the *New York Times*, and *The Columbus Dispatch* during the years 1987 to 2006?
3. What differences are there in the frequency of news coverage of Robert Mapplethorpe's and Chris Olifi's works in the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Columbus Dispatch* before and after the controversies?
4. What differences are there in the reported causes of the art controversies as reported in the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Columbus Dispatch* articles?

Rationale

As an artist and art investor my interest in these matters is not objective, however I believe that the reporting about art controversies is worthy of studying because the news is an important source that I rely on for information about what is happening in the arts community. My initial interest in media coverage of art controversies began in 1989 after reading about the Mapplethorpe controversy in *Art in America*. However, more recently, while researching art controversies for a graduate communications law class, I became re-inspired to explore media framing in more depth. The event made me wonder why the media were continually reporting on the art controversy and why some details would appear in some articles and not in others.

Scholarly interest in media coverage of controversies has been rapidly growing since the 1970's. One important line of inquiry within the body of research has been on conflicts (Gans, 1979; Donohue, Olien & Tichenor, 1985; Cramer, 2005). The present research contributes to and augments those inquiries as well as the growing body of studies that have centered on media framing and agenda building theories. The strong link between the media and conflicts identified in past research serves an initiative for scholars to focus on the media's inclusion in the art controversies and to sustain and support current research efforts.

To date the concept of news framing, news gate keeping, and agenda setting have been the focus of much scholarly attention, however few have examined the relationship between media coverage of art controversies and these concepts. This study fills the gap

by examining news media coverage on art controversies in the United States from 1987 to 2006. By studying this narrow subject of art controversies, framing and agenda setting concepts may be incorporated into contemporary investigations, leading to a greater understanding of why portrayals of art controversies may vary among news journalists. More important questions as to what the audience does with the news, as well as how the journalists use the news, however are beyond this scope of this research.

Empirical studies that have examined art controversies specifically have focused on the relationships between artistic value, culture, and the media, whereas others have studied different types of media coverage, such as television broadcasts. Furthermore the Brooklyn Museum and Mapplethorpe controversies have been studied in relation to U.S. arts policy (Himmelstein & Zald, 1984; Obrien, 1997; Brooks, 2001; Miller 2000), as rhetorical analyses, and as empirical opinion surveys about the arts (Hart, 1984; Neuman, 1990; Zaller, 1991; DiMaggio & Pettit, 1999) in great depth as individual case studies rather than grouped together for comparison. While these studies are beneficial, they have not examined the relationship between the news media's participation in and portrayal of art controversies from a historical or social perspective using framing or agenda setting theories.

Analysis of media coverage of art controversies may be of heuristic value for society as media plays a vital role in shaping the opinions and perceptions of individuals. By being more aware of how the news media frame art controversies the public can choose to formulate their own opinions and attitudes about the art controversies and

determine what issues are relevant to and newsworthy for themselves. Furthermore, this study may provide a better understanding as to how the press effects and disseminates information in a democratic society, particularly in regard to public funding for the arts.

Literature Review

Although the focus of this analysis is on how art controversy news is covered, it also fits into the broader context of research on news coverage of conflicts and protests. Evidence from several studies suggest that media do frame issues, use agendas in selecting what types of events receive coverage for their benefit, and increase their coverage on controversies once the news stories become part of their repertoire.

Providing insight into the occurrence of media coverage of art controversies in the news and effects of agenda setting on social and political protests, Boyle et al. (2005) used content analysis to assess newspaper reporting about protest group activities in five Wisconsin newspapers from 1960 to 1999. The research touched on matters of selection and description bias, how media treatment of protests changed over time, as well as how factors underlying the protest paradigm have been sustained over different time frames. In their content analysis the researchers analyzed 235 articles, looking specifically at the headlines and the year in which the protest occurred, in order to track protest coverage over time. They found that the amount of newspaper coverage of protests that news media chose to cover steadily declined and that war and labor protests typically received more media coverage than social protests. Although there was no conclusive evidence to explain what was the cause of the decline was, Boyle et al. speculated that the decline may have been due to either the newspapers being selective of what types of protests to cover in order to retain newspaper audiences or that a possible shift on news coverage reflected the shift in the number of protests.

Building on organizational level studies which examined how media frame issues, Fico and Drager's (2001) analysis of local conflicts stories in mid-sized newspapers found that readers had a 6 in 10 chance of encountering a fair, two-sided story or a two-sided story that was dominated by one source. Results also indicated that the more stories written on an issue, the more unfair the individual stories were, suggesting that ongoing coverage might favor one view. While readers of news stories about conflict were most likely to encounter an unbalanced story, imbalance was most likely to be attributed to story placement rather than unequal story sourcing.

Fico and Drager's (2001) analysis also yielded evidence that reporters assign greater priority to stories about conflict and are more likely to pursue issues through several stories. In addition, it was discovered that continuity of coverage on stories about conflict was more likely to yield individual stories that were imbalanced in terms of space and prominence. While there is evidence to support this claim, the researchers acknowledged that this may be the result of competitive intensity among news organizations and the size of the news organization corresponding to larger newsroom staff available to cover stories about conflict. Furthermore, these findings are congruent with earlier research (Fico & Soffin, 1994), that explored fairness and balance issues in local policy issues portrayed in local newspapers, that claimed by extension, news attention to particular sides of a single issue may similarly influence public salience and thereby the policy outcome.

Fairness and balance issues however only scratch the surface of this analysis and are part of a broader inquiry into the newsworthiness of art controversies. In an analysis

of arts and cultural stories in mainstream mid-sized newspapers, Janeway and Szántó (2003) ascertained that art stories make up smaller areas of coverage in most magazines and appear in feature pages, book review pages, and weekend arts and feature supplements. Of the 186 articles sampled, 34 were devoted to visual arts as opposed to 96 music articles, suggesting arts and cultural stories are less newsworthy than music and the performing arts. Janeway and Szántó's study also indicated that art stories comprise the smallest amount of area coverage in most newspapers and are given less space than sports and business stories. Additionally, findings suggest that stories about the visual arts are not as newsworthy when compared to other subjects and may be indicative of the public's commitment to local and regional arts and cultural activities.

In a content analysis of network television news portrayals of art and artists on network television news, Ryan and Sim (1990) found contradictory evidence that suggests art is newsworthy when stories center on ownership and origin issue. In addition to concluding that art was more likely to make news when it related to public issues rather than private aesthetic experience, it was found that portrayals of television broadcasters differ from newspaper journalists. Comparing television networks and time periods from 1976 to 1985, 15 types of stories about art were analyzed and revealed that 14 % of television news art stories concentrated on art controversy. While the amount of time devoted to each story and placement within the broadcast were categorized for distinguishing types of stories in general, controversy type stories were examined in depth to discover that controversy stories occur more frequently than stories about exhibition, defacement, and finance topics.

In addition, data revealed that controversy stories focus on particular artists and styles of the work were identified as sources of public debates.

Furthermore, it was discovered that 25% of new stories deal with politicians who used the news coverage as publicity opportunities. These findings support earlier findings in earlier studies conducted by Gans (1979) who concluded that most network domestic news coverage on included politicians and other federal officials and that these individuals were more likely to be in news stories than unknown persons. Gans' contentions are additionally supported by findings in Paletz and Entman's (1981) study on the power of media on politics which makes a strong argument that mainstream media center on conflicts and controversies and prominent leaders are active participants in art controversies. Results of these studies may be an indication of who is most likely to be identified as participants in the Brooklyn Museum and Mapplethorpe controversies as portrayed by the news media in the present study.

While evidence that television news coverage of art stories are treated as human-interest stories rather than being presented in more serious frames is offered, only coverage of art controversies from 1976 to 1985 were analyzed, events that occurred prior to the Brooklyn Museum and Mapplethorpe controversies. The present study, like the research of McLeod and MacKenzie (1998), explores media coverage of art controversies. McLeod and MacKenzie surmised that news media assist in establishing the context in which audience opinions regarding controversies are formed, as well as having the potential to influence how the public thinks about issues like art controversies and public funding for

the arts, especially when particular art controversies are experienced only through news media stories. In their content analysis of the print media's role and public reaction to the controversy over NEA funding of the Mapplethorpe exhibition, McLeod and MacKenzie found that news coverage of art controversies influence how the public think about issues when controversies receive attention from the press.

The researchers discovered that the news media's portrayal of the Mapplethorpe controversy elevated public awareness in public funding issues because the media made the issue newsworthy and as part of its agenda building scheme. McLeod and MacKenzie categorized events according to when they occurred before and after the public funding issue appeared in Congress, with a breakdown by the number of stories and paragraphs within the articles. The introduction of the public funding issue was used as the fulcrum point on the timeline and represents the greatest number of news stories. For events that occurred before and after the issue appeared in Congress, such as the exhibition's opening and when the Corcoran Gallery director resigned, direct observation reveals that fewer stories appeared. 95.4% of the articles were identified as being written after the NEA issue appeared on the congressional agenda. Claims that news media heighten public awareness were attributed to politicians providing details about the public funding issue to the mass media were supported by the data, however any possible connection to media framing or reoccurring themes other than public funding within the news stories were overlooked.

Furthermore, McLeod and MacKenzie offered only one explanation: that the appearance of the issue on the congressional agenda incited the media's interest and

increased the amount of news coverage. The study reveals evidence that news media's interest was in the public funding issue and that coverage increased after the issue appeared in Congress, however the articles analyzed were restricted only to events that centered on public funding issues. Due to the data only pertaining to this particular issue and these specific events, it is impossible to ascertain if other issues or events may or may not have contributed to increased media coverage and would have any effect on the outcomes of the present study.

Evidence of increased media coverage can be seen in the number of stories about the Corcoran Gallery cancellation of the Mapplethorpe exhibition, which yielded the highest percentage of coverage. Coverage on developments before and after the cancellation yielded lower percentages of stories, suggesting that the event may have increased media coverage. McLeod and MacKenzie present solid evidence that the Corcoran Gallery cancellation of the exhibition may have been one event that served as the catalyst for increasing media coverage, however it may have been a coincidence that the cancellation occurred at the same time public funding issues were included on the congressional agenda. Furthermore, the results of their study showed that museum attendance soared after the cancellation and may be indicative of public reaction to this particular event rather than increased media coverage. Increased attendance at the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston however may also suggest that subsequent events and news stories may have either

sustained media coverage initiated by the Corcoran Gallery cancellation or was the result of some other cause.

Moreover, the analysis only captured two years of news coverage, December 1, 1988 to December 31, 1989, identifying short-term effects on news coverage rather than long-term effects. Perhaps it is possible that other events and public reaction to specific elements may have increased media coverage on the controversy. Art controversies that received news media coverage from 1987 to 2006 may yield different conclusions about the impact certain events had on news coverage or identify other influential factors that explain what may have been the catalyst for increased news coverage. By analyzing the news stories presented about art controversies and the frequency on which they occurred in the present research, additional issues and events may be identified as possible causes that may have contributed to increased media coverage during the subsequent events.

Method

This study used content analysis of news coverage of the Brooklyn Museum and Mapplethorpe art controversies across the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Columbus Dispatch* from January 1, 1987 to December 31, 2006 to discover what issues were presented in the stories, the number of news stories devoted to each art controversy, the types of sources quoted, whether frames were present, and if any similarities or differences in the coverage of the art controversies in each publication exist. By using a large span of time, it was possible to discover how art controversy coverage emerged and disappeared over time.

The time frame for this study was limited by the fact that the Mapplethorpe exhibition first opened in December 1988 in Philadelphia (McLeod & McKenzie, 1998) and the art controversies did not appear in the newspapers until 1988 and 1989. Approximately one year of coverage prior to when the Mapplethorpe exhibition opened in Philadelphia and data up to 2006 were included in the analysis in order to assess whether any changes in news coverage frequency on the artist's works occurred. By extending the time frame to include contemporary stories the long-term effects on news coverage of the Mapplethorpe and Brooklyn Museum controversies can be identified.

Publication Selection

The *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Columbus Dispatch*, constitute the analysis target. Newspaper media are the exclusive focus of this study because of their national coverage, scope of their reputations as leaders in the journalism

community, reporting styles, differing levels of reporter expertise in the visual arts field, publication frequency, and diversity of readers. Despite their distinct reputations and niche markets, these publications inform readers interested in the visual arts and serve as primary sources of information on art controversies for some people.

Consumers of print media have a reasonable level of control over their news consumption and can selectively choose what and when they want to read the news. The immediacy of newspapers is advantageous for the reader to accessing information about an event more rapidly, capturing events in detail and depth, however news journalists are restricted by the time constraints to investigate a story or check on the validity of the sources they rely on. Journalists must balance divergent views from various sources and make judgments as to what details of the story are newsworthy. Adequate reporting demands that the journalists raise and pursue pertinent interpretive questions, persevere to seek out opposing arguments, and possess the integrity to report with equal vigor contradictory information that might emerge later (Weigel & Pappas, 1981). Lapses in judgment not only have serious consequences for journalists, but may also jeopardize the public's trust in the news media.

The addition of a two mainstream newspapers, *The Washington Post* and *The Columbus Dispatch*, permits more news coverage on the art controversies to be captured and the difference in newspaper reporting styles on identical controversies to be assessed in greater detail. *The Columbus Dispatch* was selected because it is representative of local newspaper coverage rather than larger newspaper organizations.

Sample and Data Collection

The census consists of every article published in every issue of the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Columbus Dispatch* from January 1, 1987 to December 31, 2006. In order to construct the census, articles were drawn from electronic databases such as the *Newspaper Abstracts with Full Text* via ProQuest Direct, *New York State Newspapers* database via Infotrac, and the *Lexis Nexis Academic* database, each targeting one of the publications to locate all news stories that exclusively mentioned the Brooklyn Museum and Mapplethorpe art controversies. This process yielded 627 articles. Sample 1 was comprised of 381 articles that appeared in the *New York Times*, sample 2 was comprised of 220 articles that appeared in *The Washington Post*, and sample 3 was composed of 26 articles that appeared in *The Columbus Dispatch*.

Article Selection

Art controversy articles were the unit of analysis in this study and were considered to be any newspaper article that dealt specifically with either controversy, focused on either artist and their work, and included stories about censorship, public funding, court cases, legal debates, and social protests and activities associated with the Mapplethorpe and Brooklyn Museum controversies. Each section of the publications, such as international, society, editorials, and culture, will be examined, however the sports section, advertisements, obituaries, and book reviews were excluded. If an article was included in the late and early editions of a newspaper on the same day, only one article was included in the data analysis.

Articles included in the census were located using the following key terms in one of the three electronic databases: “Brooklyn Museum,” “Mapplethorpe,” “Olifi,” “*Sensation*,” “virgin,” “dung,” “Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center,” “Corcoran Gallery,” “National Endowment for the Arts,” “NEA,” “Dennis Barrie,” “Guiliani,” “perfect moment,” “culture war,” “Saatchi,” “Helms Amendment,” “*X portfolio*,” “nude photographs,” and “obscenity.” As appropriate search terms, the name of the institutional site of the controversies, the name of the controversial exhibits, names assigned to the type of controversy, the artists names, the subject/or title of the controversial work, named participants, and the materials used in the controversial art were used to identify the prominence of themes in the articles. Articles that did not have any of these terms appearing in either the headline or lead paragraph were not included.

Measures

A content codebook (Appendix B) was developed to analyze each article. Articles were coded according to the following key variables: (1) prominence of theme; (2) frequency of news coverage over 20 years; (3) frequency of news coverage before and after the controversies; and (4) reported causes. Each coder began by reading and coding each article as an independent unit. Coders were provided a description of the four coding categories to assist them in distinguishing between the variables.

Prominence of theme was measured by coding each article according to the section in which the article first appeared within the publication. Sections include politics, arts and entertainment, supplements, local, business, special reports, opinion pages, and news in

brief. If the article did not appear in any of these categories the article was coded as other. In addition to the placement of the article, the page position of the article within the page layout was coded into one of two categories: front page or other. If the article began on one page and was continued on another, only the page where the article first began was coded. Coders measured the actual space devoted to the art controversies by word count. An article was coded when it is at least one paragraph in length and contained at least 100 words. Inclusion of a byline was coded as either being present or not present. Additionally the identity of the author or reporting source was recorded when the identity of the author was made known. Unidentified authors and reporting sources were coded as unknown.

The potential for framing effects were examined by comparing thematic and episodic coverage. Comparisons were made by assessing how subtle effects (e.g. tone of reporting source), and type of coverage (e.g. type of news item) were presented. Themes presented applied to when censorship, art policy reform, economic health, and legal topics were mentioned in the articles, with the predominate theme being coded. In the instances when other themes were mentioned the coder selected other. When no theme was present the variable was coded as no theme. Number of themes presented applied to the number of themes that appeared within the article. If none of the four possible themes: censorship/ First amendment rights, art policy reform, or economic health was presented, then the variable was coded as none.

Presence of graphics refers to whether a photograph or illustration accompanied the article. Graphics were coded as either present or not present, by type, and by the subject

portrayed in the graphic. Subject categories included persons: protestors, politicians, religious leaders, artist, artwork, and unidentifiable from the description of the graphic provided. If any other subject matter was portrayed it was coded as other.

Presentation of issues was divided into twelve subcategories: controversy activity reported, consequence presented, terms used to describe the artists work, terms used to describe the controversy, headline topic, tone of headline, values presented, tone of article, type of format, frames presented, dominant frame, and controversy topic mentioned in the article. Each coder reviewed each paragraph to determine whether the paragraph presented an issue in context of an art controversy and then coded the items used to identify the issues from pre-selected lists.

Controversy activities reported referred to events such as social protests, legal debates, the exhibition cancellation, and congressional matters that were mentioned in the article. Any other types of activities mentioned were coded as other.

Consequence presented applied to any political, social, economic, or legal outcome presented in the article. Absent consequences or other types of consequences were coded as none.

Terms used to describe the artist's work were coded using a three-point scale with 1 as balanced, 2 as favorable, and 3 as unfavorable. A term was considered "favorable" if there were more positive than negative adjectives, in contrast with "unfavorable" stories where negative adjectives outnumbered positive ones; a story was considered "balanced"

if there was a balance between positive and negative adjectives. If no terms were used to describe the work, the variable was coded as none.

Terms used to describe the controversy applied to any description of the events. Twenty-one distinct terms, as listed in the codebook, were coded when the terms appeared in the article. Terms used to describe the controversy, other than those listed in the codebook, were coded as other. If no terms were used to describe the controversy, the variable was coded as none.

The content of each story was analyzed, with each paragraph being coded for any one of the following predominate value mentioned: cultural, spiritual/religious, economic, political, legal, and social. Absence of these values or the presence of additional values was coded as other.

Type of format referred to the genre of the article and was coded accordingly into one of nine categories found in the codebook. The type of coverage was presented with comparisons made across the publications. When the article appeared as any other format it was coded as other.

The presence and absence of frames acted as a guide to assess the journalistic tone and was evaluated through the analysis of adjectives used in the news stories. Coders were instructed to assess the number of supportive, neutral, and critical paragraphs. The tone or direction of tone, whether positive or negative, varied in whether it was supportive, positive in nature, or critical, negative in nature of the art controversy. Both headline and article tone was coded using a five-point scale with 1 as highly supportive, 3 as neutral, and 5 as highly

critical of the art controversy. A news story was considered “supportive” if there were more favorable than unfavorable adjectives used, in contrast with “critical” stories where unfavorable adjectives outnumbered favorable ones; a story was considered “neutral” if there was a balance between favorable and unfavorable adjectives. Articles that differed slightly in the number of critical or supportive paragraphs were coded either “somewhat critical” or “somewhat supportive.” Finally, articles with large differences (i.e. three or more) between critical and supportive paragraphs were coded as either “highly critical” or “highly supportive.”

Frames presented referred to the different ways in which the media portrayed the issues and events. Four distinct types of framing techniques: attribution of responsibility, conflict, consequences, and values were coded accordingly. Absence or presence of additional frames was coded as other or none. In addition, dominant issues such as censorship, public funding, and obscenity laws that have been framed, were coded were present.

Frequency of news coverage was measured in several ways. First coders recorded the day, month, and year of the article so that news coverage could be tracked over time. Measurement of frequency included the sum of all articles and the date (month and year) the article was published to determine how many and how often articles appeared in each of the publications. The amount and type of coverage is presented with comparisons made across the newspapers and magazine across time. In order to measure the number of times either controversy was mentioned in the articles, three variables were coded to indicate whether one or both controversies were mentioned, or if neither controversy were

mentioned. Articles not mentioning either controversy were coded as other. Additionally, each controversy was measured according to whether the artist's work was mentioned or absent in the articles.

Each controversy was measured according to the sum of all articles appearing in each publication on a given day. The first year of coverage of the artist's works was analyzed by counting the number of times news stories appeared from January 1, 1987 to June 21 1989 and January 1, 1998 to October 2, 1999 to determine the frequency in which the artists were mentioned in the news stories prior to the controversies. In addition, the amount of times in which the artist's work was mentioned after the controversy was measured by counting the number of news stories which appeared after June 12, 1989 and October 2, 1999 up to December 31, 2006.

The reported cause category was divided into five subcategories. Measures were added to assess the reported causes, which source assertions were cited, credentials of the sources quoted, and who was identified as a participant in the controversies. Each article was coded as one of the five sources represented in the article. Reported statements or actions by a person, faction, or interest group quoted were counted to determine the number of times the first source was quoted in the article.

Reliability

Two graduate student coders coded all articles selected to ensure objectivity of observation. Each coder participated in a two-hour training session to ensure they understood and agreed on each of the variables used. All areas of divergence were resolved by discussion. Following the practice session, each coder analyzed and coded all 627 articles to test intercoder reliability and obtained a .64 level of agreement using Holsti's formula across all categories.¹ Individual category reliability ranged from .25 (e.g., article tone) to 1.0 (e.g., controversy topic). Although the reliability rate of .75 and higher was achieved across most measures, the percentage of agreement on six of the 24 variables fell below .60. Possible explanations for the variation in judgment across coders may be attributed to coding errors, missing data, and the limited nature of nominal and ordinal level measurements in distinguishing the degree of differences in adjectives used in the news stories.

The primary coder conducted an intracoder reliability test by selecting and analyzing a random sample of 12 articles. Between the primary coder's initial coding and the subsequent coding one week later, the intracoder reliability was 97%.

Results and Discussion

The three publications offered diverse perspectives regarding the section in which the news stories appeared, article and headline valence, controversy activities, consequences, frequency, use of frames, and the participants' roles in the events. The *Post* more often framed the controversies as economically motivated, while emphasizing congressional debates over public funding and economic consequences. The *Times* and the *Dispatch* placed greater emphasis on the legal debates about obscenity issues, and framed the controversies in terms of social consequences, however; the *Times* offered a more conciliatory tone toward the artist's and their work in the articles.

Prominence of Theme

Differences on 20 measures used to assess prominence of theme and presentation of issues in news coverage were significant across all three publications as illustrated in Table 1, differing on where the articles appeared, inclusion of a byline, author identity, headline topic, headline tone, article tone, themes presented, presence of graphics, type of graphic, graphic subject, controversy activities, consequences, controversy terms, values, format, and frames. Although the *Dispatch's* portrayal of graphics and identification of a single person as being responsible for either controversy deviated from the *Times'* and the *Post's* portrayals, the journalistic tone of the news stories was predominately critical in all three publications.

Coverage of the Brooklyn Museum and Mapplethorpe controversies in the *Times* constituted 61% of total coverage in contrast to the *Post's*, which made up 35% of the total

coverage analyzed, and the *Dispatch*, which accounted for 4% of total coverage. Rarely were the art controversies presented as front-page news; most stories were presented as arts and entertainment interest stories rather than politically focused topics, suggesting that the art controversies were less important than other events at that time. Only the article characteristic page position within the newspaper layout generated statistically significant differences on the basis of coverage type ($\chi^2 = 333.093$, $df = 1$, $p = .000$). Eighty-six percent of the news stories appeared on pages other than the front pages of all the publications combined, 12% of the *Times* articles appeared on the front page, and none ever appeared in the *Dispatch* on the front page.

Forty percent of all news coverage (248 out of 627 articles) appeared in the politics sections, indicating that art controversies were not presented as political themes and that they have no political significance to the American press. Of the 627 articles analyzed, 187 articles appeared in the politics section of the *Times*. Unlike the *Times*, a total of 151 articles appeared in the arts and entertainment sections of the *Post* and the *Dispatch*, suggesting that these publications viewed the controversies as human-interest stories centered on cultural activities, rather than having political significance. The present study's findings concerning newspaper section placement, replicates Janeway and Szántó's (2003) findings that news stories about the visual arts are not as newsworthy when compared to other subjects and may be indicative of the news media's commitment to local and regional arts and cultural activities in Washington and Columbus.

Readers of news stories about art controversies were most likely not to encounter a balanced portrayal in respect to space. Article length measures generated statistically significant differences on the basis of newspaper source ($\chi^2 = 12.275$, $df = 2$, $p = .002$). While comparison of the *Times* and the *Post* possessed the greatest number of differences ($U = 37768.500$, $z = -3.481$, $p = .000$), comparisons made between the *Post* and the *Dispatch* and the *Times* and the *Dispatch* were not significant. Similar to Janeway and Szántó's study of arts and cultural stories which indicated that art stories comprise the smallest amount of area coverage in most newspapers and are given less space, an average of more than 201 words were devoted to critical reporting of the art controversies, indicating that the articles were shorter in length than the average article length of most large, mid-sized, and small newspapers. Article length, when coupled with the amount of coverage suggests that the news journalists may have not portrayed the events in a thorough manner.

Furthermore, eighty-one percent of the total news coverage did not carry a byline, implying that the news stories were not considered important, the authors did not want to take credit for the news stories, or possibly that the authors did not want to be held accountable for the news stories. Statistically significant differences among comparisons made between the *Times* and the *Post* ($\chi^2 = 4.122^b$, $df = 1$, $p = .042$) emerged; however, no significant differences existed between the *Times* and the *Dispatch* and the *Post* and the *Dispatch*.

While unidentified authors and staff reporters wrote equal portions (40% each) of the articles, the *Times* staff reporters wrote the majority (32%) of art controversy articles contained in the census. Reporters of the *Times* and the *Post* were more likely to be art

critics and cultural columnists, possibly possessing more art expertise and experience than the *Dispatch* staff reporters and may have been more influential in promoting cultural values to their audiences. When further analyzed, it was discovered that the greatest differences existed when the *Times* was compared to the *Post*, in which the *Times* was less apt to acquire articles from news service bureaus than the *Dispatch*. Unlike the *Times* and the *Dispatch*, articles appearing in the *Post* were more likely to be written by unidentified authors and citizens.

Analysis of article characteristics by headline topic revealed that 37% of total news coverage did not mention the artists, the artwork, the exhibitions, participants, court cases, or protests as often as the institutions where the exhibitions were held. Further exploration showed that the greatest difference ($\chi^2 = 84.714$, $df = 9$, $p = .000$) occurred between the *Times* and the *Post* in which the *Post* featured more headlines about the National Endowment for the Arts agency. Comparisons between the *Post* and the *Dispatch* revealed no significant differences. By placing emphasis on the museums and the funding agency in the headline, the newspapers may have unintentionally implied to their readers that these institutions were the only focus of the articles. In addition, as the most important element of the news stories, the headlines may have also enticed the audiences to read the news stories in their entirety and discover more facts about the controversies.

Thematic coverage across newspapers differed significantly ($\chi^2 = 193.718$, $df = 5$, $p = .000$); arts policy reform was the predominant theme in the *Times* and the *Post*, indicating the newspapers assigned the art controversies news value when they were used as a vehicle

for discussing Congressional debates over art policy reform. None of the five possible themes (censorship/First amendment rights, art policy reform, economic health, legal, or other) was prevalent in the *Dispatch*, indicating that the *Dispatch* journalists either chose not to emphasize any of the themes or may have overlooked them as being relevant to the issues. Additionally, the number of themes presented in the articles was counted revealing significant statistical differences between the *Post* and the *Dispatch* ($t = -3.552$, $df = 244$, $p = .000$); and the *Dispatch* and the *Times* ($t = -2.362$, $df = 405$, $p = .019$). Over half (56%) of the total news stories assessed in the census had at least one theme presented; 23% had two themes; and 4% presented three or more themes in the articles. The fewest number of themes (1.63) was presented in the *Post*, whereas the *Dispatch* reported the greatest number of themes (2.46). Regardless of whether it was the intention of the author to imply a particular theme or explicitly state which themes were most prominent, all of the news stories inherently projected a particular outlook on the changes in the events, the interaction of the participants, and the negative view their sources had on arts policy reform.

Prominence of theme was also measured by assessing differences in the presence of graphics, graphic type, and subject matter of the graphic. Graphics were more likely to appear in the *Post* and the *Dispatch* than in the *Times*. Photographs and illustrations did not accompany the majority (68%) of total news coverage; however, when graphics were utilized, photographs (70%) were used more often than illustrations (2%). In addition, subjects other than protestors, politicians, artists, artwork, and religious leaders were featured the most (16%) and religious leaders were portrayed the fewest number of times (3%),

suggesting that they were not key participants in the controversies. The most significant differences occurred when the *Post* and the *Dispatch* were compared ($\chi^2 = 18.482$, $df = 6$, $p = .005$), indicating that no illustrations were used in the *Dispatch* and that the presence of photographs was more likely to occur in the *Dispatch* rather than in the *Post*. Moreover, the greatest difference ($\chi^2 = 34.266$, $df = 7$, $p = .000$) was detected when the *Times* was compared to the *Dispatch*, indicating that the artists' work was portrayed more often in the *Times* than in the *Dispatch*. The exclusion of graphics may have hindered the journalist's ability to provide supplementary information to the reader or to capture the reader's attention.

Controversy activities, such as social protests, the exhibition cancellation, legal debates, and congressional matters, were coded if they were mentioned in the articles. In terms of events, overall the reporters largely followed types of activities not included in the codebook (49%), legal debates (19%) on some occasions, and overlooked protests (2%). Differences across the publications were significant ($\chi^2 = 374.064$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). When the *Times* and the *Post* and the *Post* and the *Dispatch* were compared significant differences were discovered in which the *Post* was more apt to present congressional matters rather than the legal debates. Social protests were the second most frequent type of controversy activity reported in the *Times* as opposed to congressional matters in the *Post*, and unlike the *Times* and the *Post*, articles about the Mapplethorpe exhibition cancellation never appeared in the *Dispatch*.

Essentially, the activities that the newspapers chose to cover steadily declined in the extent to which the status quo was challenged. While some members of Congress

opposed grants being issued to controversial artists, the arts community activities were largely invisible in the press coverage. A possible explanation may be that the news journalists were selective in the activities they chose to report on due to time and space constraints or had limited access to arts community activities such as the NEA's board meetings. In addition, news coverage may have reflected a shift in the controversies themselves in which the activities occurred less frequently and the artist's works no longer challenged the status quo.

The results indicate that the art controversies received some coverage in the news, however a few articles were sensationalistic. Protests, which occurred in Washington due to the Corcoran Gallery's cancellation of the Mapplethorpe exhibition, received extensive coverage in the *Post*; however, the protests were overlooked by the other two publications, suggesting a regional bias in coverage or lack of investigative journalism by the *Times*' and *Dispatch*'s reporters. Social protests resulting from the Corcoran's cancellation of the Mapplethorpe exhibition in Washington D.C. were seen as newsworthy relative to other controversy activities such as congressional debates over public funding. However when protests occurred in Cincinnati, these events were deemed less newsworthy and garnered little coverage compared to activities such as the legal debates over obscenity issues.

Differences in news coverage were also analyzed using the consequence variable to determine if any political, social, economic, or legal outcomes, implications, and considerations were presented in the articles. Although all of the publications featured no consequences in almost half (47%) of the articles, comparisons between the *Times*

and the *Post* revealed the greatest differences ($\chi^2 = 42.280$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). From the observations made, the art controversies were framed by the *Post* with emphasis on economic consequences, reflecting on financial issues of public funding, revenues for the artists and institutions that exhibited their work, and the impact they were likely to have on the local community more often than the *Times*. In contrast, the *Dispatch* and the *Times* emphasized the social consequences of denying funding to artists more than the *Post*. By placing emphasis on the social implications the news media increased the relevance and newsworthiness of the art controversies to their audiences, creating awareness about the importance of visual arts and reinforcing the cultural values of the community.

Regardless of which consequence was reported more often, the news media act as agents of social control and used the strategy of consequences frequently to accentuate coverage by emphasizing certain issues. News about events that threaten social change provides information about a breakdown of normal operations, and news about events that break norms conveys direct ideological alternatives to the status quo (Shoemaker, Danielian & Brendlinger, 1991). While there is evidence that the newspapers considered the controversies newsworthy, the events were likely to be covered by these publications as they were local occurrences that involved local participants within their circulation and the events resonated with general social concerns and changes in the social structures within the community. Press coverage of the events conveyed information about ideological conflicts over public funding which challenged the status quo.

Prominence of theme was also explored through the analysis of terms reporters used to describe the artist's work. Articles were coded as either conveying a positive, negative, or neutral impression of the artist's work. Comparisons between publications revealed no significant differences ($\chi^2 = 2.304$, $df = 2$, $p = .316$). Although coverage was mostly balanced and neutral on most occasions, the news may have been slanted in some instances in order for the journalists to focus on the controversies rather than critique the art. The distribution of percentages for the terms used to describe the events across the publications was somewhat equally dispersed: over one third (35%) of news coverage did not use any evaluative terms to describe the art; however, one third (33%) used favorable terms to describe the artist's work. The *Dispatch* used the greatest portion (31%) of unfavorable terms, suggesting that the journalists were more skeptical of the artists and their work, although conservative public views on contemporary art may be the driving force behind this skepticism and journalists might reflect preferences for more traditional forms of art. The *Post* used the smallest portion (21%) of unfavorable terms to describe the work, indicating that the reporters were less skeptical of the artist and their work than the *Times'* and the *Dispatch's* journalists. The outcome of these results however may be unreliable as coders achieved a low level of agreement when intercoder reliability testing was assessed for this measure.

Evidence that the issues did change over time suggests that the Mapplethorpe's work was covered more critically than Olifi's work. Despite favorable reviews in the first year of coverage, reporters became more critical of Mapplethorpe's work after the

controversy erupted and news on the controversy began to appear in the news stories. By the time the exhibition arrived in Cincinnati, Mapplethorpe's work was portrayed consistently in a negative manner to newspaper audiences.

News framing becomes evident in the verbs used by both newspapers and the reasons they offered to explain the happening of such an incident. Differences in terminology used to describe the events were compared among the publications and were significant ($\chi^2 = 16661.421$, $df = 18$, $p = .000$). Although no conclusive evidence can be discerned from this measure due to a low level of agreement between coders, 20% of the articles referred to the events as controversies. Significant differences were found between the *Times* and the *Post* as well as the *Times* and the *Dispatch*. The *Post* referred to the events as controversies more often than the *Times*, whereas the *Dispatch* only described the events using the terms controversy, brouhaha, and legal battle, and the *Times* used the terms battle more often than the other two publications. By using negative descriptors, journalists may have given readers the impression that the events were controversial in nature and that conflict was more likely to be resolved in the courtroom or as a battle.

The content of each article was assessed to determine whether the presence of cultural, spiritual/religious, economic, political, legal, or social values was used by the news media to define the issues. Cultural values were found to be the most prominent (35%) value in the coverage, followed by legal values (18%), political values (12%) and economic values (12%). Emphasis was placed on economic values more often in the *Post* than the *Times*, whereas staff reporters of the *Times* focused on political values. In

addition, the presentation of values in the *Times* differed from the *Dispatch* ($\chi^2 = 29.401$, $df = 7$, $p = .000$) in which social values were never presented in the *Dispatch* but appeared in the *Times* on more than one occasion. Moreover, the *Dispatch* was more apt to present spiritual/religious, economic, political, and legal values than the *Times*. By emphasizing certain values, news media were likely to portray different facets of the controversies, thereby appealing to a diverse audience with different dispositions.

The variance in news coverage among the newspapers may be explained by the reporter's divergent views of the community where the art controversies occurred. While reporters in the larger metropolitan areas were more apt to investigate the conflicts in depth, the smaller community of Columbus was less likely to report on the conflicts. Only on the occasions when local community values were challenged, did the *Dispatch* choose to report on the conflicts.

In order to explore thematic coverage more in depth, the type of format, or genre of the article, was coded using one of 9 categories. The type of article that appeared with the greatest frequency was news stories. The distribution of percentages for the type of articles across the publications was somewhat unequally dispersed: over half (60%) of the articles were comprised of news stories, followed by opinion letters (9%) and columns (8%). On several occasions the *Times* presented feature articles on the events and interviews with participants in the events whereas these formats were never presented to the *Post* readers. Comparisons between the *Post* and the *Dispatch* ($\chi^2 = 23.572$, $df = 7$, $p = .001$) indicated that press releases, columns, and op/ed formats never appeared in the *Dispatch*, whereas

they had appeared in the *Post* on some occasions. Although readers' personal opinions appeared in the newspapers on several occasions, the news reporters largely ignored reporting on where community members stood on the issues to their audiences.

Perhaps one of the more interesting aspects of the results in this study involved the concept of multiple frames. The presence and absence of four framing techniques (attribution of responsibility, conflict, consequences, and values) were assessed to determine how the media portrayed the issues and events. Research indicates that issues with a higher degree of conflict have a greater influence on the agenda than would be warranted by the sheer amount of coverage given to them (MacKuen & Coombs, 1981). Results of the present study show that news frames presented in the news stories varied among the publications, and taken as a whole, the conflict frame had more of a presence in the news stories. Conflict was given prominence by emphasizing three issues: protests at each of the institutions where the exhibitions were held, the congressional debates over arts policy reform, and the legal debates in the Mapplethorpe trial in Ohio.

Of these four techniques, fewer than half (37%) of the articles employed conflict as the dominant framing technique. The *Times* produced the highest portion (39%) of values, whereas the *Post* (49%) and the *Dispatch* (46%) focused on conflict. Attribution of responsibility was never used as a framing technique in the *Dispatch* and was the least often employed technique used in the *Times* and the *Post*. These resonate with earlier research findings by Boyle et al. (2005) who found that news frames used in protest coverage changed over time as issues evolved. The data for this study, however, indicate

that while the focus of the issues changed, the frames themselves remained stable across time. Results for this measure however may be inconclusive as a low level of coding reliability was achieved for this measure.

Regardless of which frame was dominant, many articles contained more than one frame, offering the audience more than one view with which they might identify or interpret the controversies. Given the controversies, there is a disparity between the way the newspaper audiences and the journalists may have viewed the art controversies and their roles. News coverage of the events were persuasive and over time sustained exposure might have persuaded the public to make generalized judgments about the quantity and slant of news coverage on public funding issues. Furthermore, the broad reach of the news media could give the public the impression that the perceived coverage was characteristic of what other communities in the United States were being presented with. While the news media chose to frame the events in a particular manner, framing and audience interpretations may not be consistent and any direct associations between the two cannot be derived from the results of this analysis. Rather it can be assumed that the publication's audiences used the news stories in conjunction with their individual values and predispositions to understand the complexity of issues.

The importance of these news stories to the publications was evidenced by the fact that conflict between the arts community groups and politicians was emphasized as a means of capturing audience interest, while attribution of responsibility was largely overlooked as a framing technique. Although the publications chose to ignore key

dimensions of the art controversies such as the reason as to why they occurred, the exclusion of details and the news media's preferential treatment of certain issues and frames suggest that description bias was employed as a framing technique. In this sense, the news stories were misleading and conveyed a sense of conflict and reinforced the impression that contemporary art is controversial, obscene, and blasphemous. While this is probably accurate of most news portrayals, art controversies appear to be vulnerable to this type of treatment and may present unwanted consequences to the communities that exhibit these works.

Important distinctions about censorship, public funding, and obscenity emerged when art controversy issues were considered. The majority of coverage focused on public funding issues; however, nearly one half (42%) of the articles did not present any issues. More often press attention focused on the public funding issue rather than First Amendment or obscenity issues. News coverage of the Mapplethorpe controversy was more inclined to encompass public funding and obscenity issues, while news coverage of the Brooklyn Museum controversy varied between public funding and religious issues. Unlike the *Times*, which never presented censorship as the dominant issue, the *Dispatch* highlighted the issue on one occasion. Moreover, differences detected between the *Times* and the *Post* ($\chi^2 = 13.577$, $df = 4$, $p = .009$) indicated that censorship was the second most prevalent issue in the *Post*.

Beyond quantity of coverage, the emphasis on the NEA budget and the extent of news stories favoring arts policy reform may explain that different trends in coverage of issues varied over time. While the greatest portion of coverage was devoted to public

funding issues, art controversy coverage had dropped dramatically over time in the degree to which they challenged the status quo, suggesting that Olifi's work may have been less controversial than Mapplethorpe's work, or possibly that arts policy reform was no longer relevant. Furthermore, issues over public funding for the arts was not a new phenomenon as the *Post* had reported on congressional discussions over public funds allotted to Andres Serrano prior to the Mapplethorpe and Brooklyn Museum controversies on more than one occasion. Moreover, news coverage on public funding issues had substantially declined, and with the arrival of the Mapplethorpe exhibition in Cincinnati, coverage shifted toward obscenity issues.

Other than opinion letters, coverage never dealt head-on with the public and arts community's support for public funding and where these groups stood on obscenity issues. When cuts to the NEA budget were proposed by Senator Helms, it was generally met with opposition by arts advocates, consistent with findings that news coverage had not shifted to support this position. In 1989, however, Senator Yates convinced Congress to amend the NEA budget so that a more palatable alternative would appeal to the majority of House representatives. Although there is no strong connection between these events relating to when the news media became more critical of public funding for the arts, the issue nonetheless was considered newsworthy by all three publications. By expanding news coverage to include public opinion and the views of the NEA, the debate over these issues may have been vastly altered. Reporters from the *Post* and the *Dispatch* might have been

alerted to the grants process, that the artists had been established as reputable artists for more than two decades, and that not all of their works were considered to be controversial.

Using a five-point scale to evaluate the adjectives used in the news stories, coders assessed whether the headline and article narratives conveyed a positive, negative, or neutral impression of the art controversies. Differences observed in headline and article tone revealed that articles tended to be somewhat critical, whereas the headlines were more neutral in tone. In most instances, journalists adhered to reporting the controversies in a balanced and fair manner in terms of headline tone. Headline tone comparisons across publications were significant ($\chi^2 = 7.650$, $df = 2$, $p = .022$). Coverage was evenly distributed: 37% was neutral, 30% was somewhat critical, 27% was highly critical, 8% was somewhat supportive, and less than 5% was highly supportive. When assessed individually, the *Times* produced the highest portion (8%) of highly supportive headlines; the *Dispatch* had the most neutral headline reporting (54%) and never presented any headline in a highly supportive tone; and the *Times* presented the most negative headlines (28%). When assessed as a group, the publications presented a greater portion (50%) of negative tone headlines than positive tone headlines (25%).

Article tone varied from somewhat critical to highly supportive. One third of the articles were somewhat critical, 20% were highly critical, 22% were neutral, 19% were somewhat supportive, and 9% were highly supportive, suggesting that the authors of the articles adopted a more critical perspective of the arts. The highest portion of highly supportive articles was produced by the *Times*, whereas the *Post* coverage was more apt to

be highly critical in tone, indicating that the varying degrees of tone may possibly be due to the different ways the news media journalists covered the issues. Similar to the headline tone findings, each publication had a total higher portion of negative articles than positive articles. While these findings are tentatively advanced due to low intercoder reliability results, the finding indicates that tension over arts policy reform may have been the driving force behind this skepticism and that journalists were simply mirroring that unrest.

Headline and article valence were most dramatic during 1989 and 1999, when both art controversies were consistently challenging the status quo. The Mapplethorpe controversy was typically covered more critically than the Brooklyn Museum controversy; however, in both cases, coverage dropped in the degree of criticism over time. These findings suggest that the reporters adopted a more critical perspective on the issues or that works of art became less controversial over time. This critical perspective is inconsistent with news media analyses of protest coverage in the United States, where the degree of criticism leveled at protests was relatively consistent across time (Boyle et al., 2005). Not only did criticism emerge slowly, the articles published several years after the controversies continued to portray a predominantly negative view of the audience. By the end of 2006, both controversies were neutral in terms of headline and article valence.

Frequency of News Coverage Over 20 Years

Using the dates of the articles, frequency of news coverage was coded according to how often the articles appeared in each of the publications over the span of 20 years. Frequency of the coverage of identical art controversies from 1987 to 2006 differed significantly ($F = 32.868$,

df = 2, p = .000). Peak news coverage of the controversies occurred in 1990 and again in 1999, whereas the lowest points of coverage occurred in 1996 and 2006. Since the exhibitions were scheduled to open and the controversies erupted during 1989 and 1999, it is not unusual that the greatest number of stories appeared in these time frames. While a large portion of coverage was generated from the *Times*, the extent to which the reporters informed the readers of public funding issues is uncertain.

Evidence of increased media coverage during these years can be seen in the number of stories about the exhibition cancellation, the verdict in the obscenity trial, and the opening of the *Sensation* exhibition in Brooklyn. Surprisingly, the peaks in news coverage also spike with when the NEA budget was under review by Congress, suggesting that the debate over public funding was newsworthy and the central focus of these controversies. Although it was discovered that the appearance of the public funding issue on the congressional agenda incited the media's interest and increased the amount of news coverage in McLeod and MacKenzie's study, the results of the present study differ and indicate that it is possible that any one of these events may have served as the catalyst for increasing media coverage.

Over the span of 20 years the Mapplethorpe controversy was periodically mentioned; however, the news media became disinterested in covering the controversies and continued reporting waned dramatically within two years of each of the events. Neither controversy received coverage in 1989, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2003, 2005, or 2006 in the *Dispatch*, nor in 1996, 2005, or 2006 in the *Post*. Dwindling print coverage may possibly be explained by the ever-changing media landscape in which computerized newspaper databases and the

Internet may have supplemented print coverage. Alternatively, it may have been the result of decisions made by editorial staff not to cover art controversy activities of the late 1990's as extensively as they did in the late 1980's or perhaps a possible shift toward coverage of other issues. Furthermore, it may be plausible that the journalists had to be more selective about the events that received coverage due to time and space constraints. News media organizations that employ larger staffs can allocate these resources to routinely cover areas in which news is more likely to occur. As a result, the *Dispatch* most likely had limited resources to devote to art controversy activities and issues that had a greater impact on the large metropolitan areas where the events took place.

Assuming that the frequency of coverage is a determinant of becoming informed, the findings suggest that the *Dispatch* had greater potential to inform the public about the art controversies and that the differences in the frequency of news stories across the three newspapers may be representative of varying news judgments made by the publications. Significant differences were found when comparisons were made between the *Dispatch* and the *Post* ($t = -.6.578$, $df = 244$, $p = .000$); however differences between the *Times* and the *Post* and the *Times* and the *Dispatch* varied. The *Times*' average years of news coverage (8.36) was higher than the *Post* (5.50), but lower than the *Dispatch* (10.62). The greatest portion of news coverage of the Brooklyn Museum controversy (12.9%) occurred in 1999 in the *Dispatch*; however, by 2002 coverage began to decline (.8%) and disappeared by 2004. Moreover, no news stories on either controversy were reported in 2003 and 2006 in the *Post*. While the results suggest that news media reporters wield

a considerable amount of control over what information is disseminated to the public regarding art controversies, the newspapers decisions to cover the controversies for a short period of time indicates that the story may have been played out.

While each publication mentioned both controversies in 1% of the articles, the *Dispatch* always mentioned at least one of the controversies and was more apt to mention both controversies in the same article than the *Times* ($\chi^2 = 13.647$, $df = 4$, $p = .009$). Comparisons among the publications to determine which controversy received more coverage revealed significant differences ($\chi^2 = 846.676$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). The majority of coverage (62%) was dedicated solely to the Mapplethorpe controversy and one quarter (25%) featured the Brooklyn Museum controversy. The greatest portion (20.4%) of news coverage for the Mapplethorpe controversy occurred in 1989 in the *Post*; however, by 1991 coverage virtually disappeared (.5%). Comparisons between the *Times* and the *Post* ($\chi^2 = 67.626$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$) indicated that the *Post* had a higher portion (84%) of news stories devoted to the Mapplethorpe controversy than the *Times* (51%).

Although the *Dispatch* consistently devoted more attention to the Mapplethorpe controversy than the Brooklyn Museum controversy, it is worth noting that coverage of the Mapplethorpe controversy dropped off toward the end of 1996 in all publications. This pattern of declining news coverage is similar to that reported by McLeod and MacKenzie; they found that coverage had dissipated substantially by October of 1990 when Congress reached a compromise that brought temporary closure to the public funding issue. The discovery made in the present analysis is consistent with the research

of Boyle et al., which found that as levels of deviance decreased, the more news coverage was apt to decline. While the years of coverage following these controversies clearly saw a decline and was most likely the result of fewer art controversy activities such as the congressional debates; declining coverage may also be attributed to the news journalist's waning interest in covering the art controversies owing to more frequent challenges.

Frequency of News Coverage Before and After the Controversies

Frequency of news coverage of Robert Mapplethorpe's and Chris Olifi's exhibitions before and after the controversies was assessed by counting how often the news stories appeared from 1987 to 1988 and 1998 to 1999. Significant differences in how often articles on the Mapplethorpe ($\chi^2 = 312.383$, $df = 2$, $p = .000$) and Olifi ($\chi^2 = 615.531$, $df = 2$, $p = .000$) exhibitions appeared before and after the controversy were detected when all three publications were compared. As previously mentioned, the Mapplethorpe controversy was clearly more prominent than the Brooklyn Museum controversy throughout the entire 20 years of coverage, due largely to Mapplethorpe being an established artist within the arts community since the 1970's; however exhibition of his work were mentioned only on a few occasions (three times) in the *Times* and the *Post* before the controversy occurred. In addition, it may be plausible that the artists were not exhibiting their works during these times or that the amount of space allocated for cultural events was limited.

It was not unusual that Mapplethorpe's exhibitions were mentioned in the larger metropolitan newspapers as Mapplethorpe was a resident of New York and the newspapers covered nationally renowned artists frequently in their reviews and columns. The most

glaring distinction was that the *Dispatch* never mentioned Mapplethorpe prior to the controversy. It is plausible that, although Columbus has several contemporary art museums, the small town newspaper more likely featured reviews on exhibitions of local artists who were better known in the local community than artists with national recognition or that the content of the artist's work were considered unimportant by the *Dispatch's* art critics. Furthermore, Olifi's work was never mentioned before the controversy in any of the publications. Absence of coverage on Olifi's exhibitions, however, may be due in part to Olifi being an emerging and relatively unknown artist prior to the inclusion of his work in the *Sensation* exhibition and that his works were primarily exhibited in Europe rather than the United States.

Although the majority of art controversy news stories occurred during the early years of this study and focused primarily on the Mapplethorpe controversy, frequency of news coverage also provides some insight into the different eras explored for this study. As news coverage of both controversies dropped dramatically over time, interest in the Mapplethorpe controversy was rekindled when coverage of the Brooklyn Museum reached its peak in 1999, suggesting that the Mapplethorpe controversy was more radical than the Brooklyn Museum controversy. Given the nature of the issues surrounding each of the controversies, the volume of coverage during the late 1980's and late 1990's was clearly indicative of the culture of conflict over public funding for the arts, religious beliefs, and First amendment rights of the artists.

Reported Causes

Analysis of reported causes of the art controversies allowed for a more in-depth exploration of framing. Articles were examined and classified into one of five subcategories: reason for art controversy, participants identified as causing the controversy, source assertions cited, credentials of sources cited, and how often the primary source was quoted. The highest portion of news coverage (17%) did not report censorship, cost of public funding, the exhibition cancellation, or obscenity charges as reasons for the art controversies occurring. These findings are inconsistent with those discovered in McLeod and MacKenzie's 1998 study, which indicated that the cancellation of the Mapplethorpe exhibition in Washington had a direct effect on media coverage and that the cost of public funding was the reason why the controversies occurred. Upon further examination it was discovered that the *Times* and the *Dispatch* never reported censorship or the exhibition cancellation as reasons for the either controversy occurring. Although the Corcoran decision to cancel the Mapplethorpe exhibition led to social protests over public funding for the arts and First amendment rights, the *Post* staff reporters were more apt to state that obscenity charges levied against Dennis Barrie was the secondary reason as to why the Mapplethorpe controversy occurred. Despite the lack of evidence identifying a single catalyst for the controversies occurring, the news journalists most likely gave the public the impression that the situation encompassed more than one reason for why the controversies occurred. Furthermore, rather than identifying a certain event as the catalyst for the turmoil, the journalists were more apt to identify a person as the reason.

The *Times*, when compared to the *Post*, revealed that Mayor Rudolph Giuliani was attributed for causing the Brooklyn Museum controversy more often than any other possible source. In addition, the *Times* was more apt to attribute Dennis Barrie as responsible for causing the Mapplethorpe controversy rather than Christina Orr-Cahill. In contrast, when compared to the *Post*, the *Dispatch*, never identified Orr-Cahill as being responsible for causing the Mapplethorpe controversy and was more apt to identify other sources than Rudolph Giuliani for causing the Brooklyn Museum controversy ($\chi^2 = 31.217$, $df = 5$, $p = .000$). Although none of the publications identified any participant as being primarily responsible for the controversies, this finding may be inconclusive due to a low percentage of agreement between coders. By assigning attribution of responsibility to these participants, the news media may have altered the perception of their audiences about museum directors and politicians, the implications of their actions, and their role in the controversies. In effect, they controlled the discourse, thus setting the agenda. By refocusing the blame on these participants, the media were able to direct attention away from the public funding issues.

Finally, this analysis focuses on the process of framing art controversies in print news, demonstrating that it is not only what is quoted but who is quoted that affects the framing process. When applicable, reported statements by a person, faction, or interest group were coded according to which source was quoted first as well as how often they were quoted. Over the course of the controversy the newspaper's portrayals of the events were based on information from conflicting sources and were ultimately reflected in the details and amount of coverage the events received. Arts community members identified

as key sources were cited more often than politicians and religious leaders. Furthermore, religious factions and citizens were disproportionately left out of news coverage and denied an opportunity to express their views.

Specifically it was found that arts community sources dominated 30% of the stories compared to 19% of the stories citing politicians and religious leaders as their sources. No differences in reporting which sources were cited were detected among the three publications. The *Times* quoted more unidentified sources than the *Post* and cited other sources and politicians more often than the *Post*. In contrast to the *Times*, the *Dispatch* always quoted identifiable sources and was more apt to quote an artist before a politician. Furthermore, the results mirror those found by Fico and Drager (2001), which suggest that the more unfavorable the stories were in their source use, the more imbalanced they were, with one side receiving more prominent and extensive coverage. Therefore the small town paper, with nearly one third (27%) of its source quotation coming from arts community members and affiliates was clearly the least balanced of the three newspapers.

It is possible that ongoing coverage was partial to citing arts community members and their affiliates; however this is unlikely as the news media on several occasions presented alternative news on the issues by politicians and religious leaders. Politicians such as Senator Jesse Helms attracted religious leaders to their cause, eventually garnering the attention of the national media. By presenting two competing positions the news media created drama in their portrayal of the events in order to maintain their

audience's attention. Unlike Ryan and Sim (1990), who found that federal and political officials were more likely to be represented in the news than unknown personalities, arts community members and their affiliates were more apt to be represented. In this context, the news media chose not use the news stories as vehicles for the observation and commentary on political views but rather placed emphasis on cultural and social values of the community.

Differences in the number of times primary sources were quoted were not significant; however, primary sources were cited at least three or more times in 34% of total news coverage. Sources were quoted on average 2.47 times in the *Times*, 2.42 times in the *Post*, and 2.62 times in the *Dispatch*. Statistical differences ($\chi^2 = 171.860$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$) in the source credentials indicated that over one third (34%) of total news coverage identified sources with credentials other than artistic and legal expertise, 22% as having artistic expertise, and 7% as having legal expertise. Unlike the *Post*, the *Times* ($\chi^2 = 25.228$, $df = 4$, $p = .004$) was more apt to cite sources with legal credentials, and cited sources with unidentified credentials more often than the *Dispatch* ($\chi^2 = 31.920$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). While arts community members and their affiliates were quoted most often in the news stories, the negative manner in which these interest groups were portrayed could have possibly been detrimental to their reputations as art experts and may have discouraged the newspaper audiences from being sympathetic to their cause or identifying with the group. Rather than discussing issues directly, many articles restricted their criticism exclusively to noting that several political representatives had opposed public funding for the arts. In

these cases the reader was only alerted that other credentialed experts disagreed with arts community members but remained uniformed about the reasons prompting the disagreement.

Conclusion

Public awareness of widely publicized conflicts, including art controversies, are largely a function of increased news media coverage and the use of news frames. This study offers a contemporary perspective on the prominence of long-term news coverage of art controversies in newspapers, and finds that the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Columbus Dispatch* differed in their portrayals of the events. The news media assigned art controversies news value when the controversies can be used as vehicles for commenting on legal debates over obscenity issues, provide a platform for arts community members and their affiliates to express their views on arts policy reform, fit the news story format, and focus on conflict between politicians and arts community members. Rarely are these art controversies accorded front-page status; usually they are treated as human-interest stories emphasizing cultural values and social consequences.

Beyond implications for framing research, the current study contends that newspapers remain a vital source of information on the arts and that news framing plays an important role in shaping the public's understanding of art and controversies over art. News frames affect attitudes by stressing specific values, facts, or other considerations and endowing them with greater relevance to an issue than under an alternative frame (de Vreese, 2004). The present results reveal that the news media retained varying combinations of framing and agenda setting techniques to sustain coverage and guide their presentations of the art controversies. Conflict and values were the most common framing techniques identified in the census, and personalization and responsibility were

rarely used to characterize the events. Over the course of the art controversy coverage, the three newspapers repeatedly used these particular frames to represent the varying levels of intensity regarding how the public funding issue was discussed. While conflict was reported as the dominant frame, generating negativity and criticism about public funding for the arts, it was reported in a constrained manner so that the dominant source was portrayed negatively and reflected the position that politicians wanted the public to have about funding for the arts. In this way, there is a disparity between the ways the readers of these newspapers and the journalists themselves viewed the art controversies. This is particularly important, as different types of art controversies maybe deemed more newsworthy than others and be drawn in and out of the media spotlight.

Several factors, primarily having to do with arts policy reform, and media landscape may provide some insight as to why the newspapers portrayed each of the events as conflicts rather than Congressional debates. A considerable amount of variation existed in the quantity of news coverage given to certain aspects of the events. The three newspapers overemphasized the Mapplethorpe controversy with widespread press coverage, but downplayed the Brooklyn Museum incident. Only high profile events, such as Dennis Barrie's trial in Ohio and the Corcoran cancellation received significant amounts of coverage, possibly because the events were significant enough to invigorate public involvement.

Article length, when combined with frequency of coverage, suggests how thorough the presentations of issues were relevant to the controversies. In many instances, the newspaper descriptions of the art controversies were thematic in nature, linking stories on

the art controversies to broader issues rather than providing detailed descriptions of the controversy itself. Continuity of coverage tended to produce unfavorable news stories, possibly as a result of the journalists' decisions to give priority to certain issues, placement of the stories, and unequal sourcing. Furthermore, the negative portrayal may indicate that the three newspapers were more critical of the status quo, thus reinforcing a negative and misleading view that all NEA grants primarily funded controversial artists resulting in negative implications for the future of public funding for the arts. Over time, the extent to which Mapplethorpe's and Olifi's works challenged traditional norms steadily declined. Newspaper journalists became more critical of less controversial works; however, the dramatic decline in news coverage corresponded with a gradual decline in critical coverage of art controversies as controversy activities occurred less frequently. Although evidence that the relationship between the relative frequency of news coverage and media interest in the controversies exists, sources other than media exposure may have contributed to media interest in these issues and the variance in news coverage among the publications.

Nonetheless, the evidence collected suggests that certain details of the events had been subjected to selection and description biases as certain activities and issues were accentuated and exaggerated, while others were ignored or overlooked. Audiences who read about the implications of the art controversies were presented with stories that were framed in terms of social consequences, which possibly effected how they understood the issues. Reporters were socially responsible for reporting on all issues and activities relevant to the controversies; however, the content of art controversy coverage was often general in

scope, portraying minimal details of the issues being contested. Newspaper reporters were selective in their portrayals of the protests and Congressional debates, with priority being given to public funding issues; however, the reasons for the controversies were given little or no attention. While the news stories presented complex issues of national importance to the public from the variety of positions and were simplified, the treatment of the issues remained somewhat critical. Specifically, the art controversies initially emerged as arts policy reform initiatives and the primary concern of politicians and grew into debates over obscenity issues. However when the Brooklyn Museum controversy occurred, coverage shifted to discussions of religion and First Amendment issues. Initially the political discourse on public funding issues was met with little opposition, but over time disagreements on arts policy reform among politicians erupted and the issue reached crisis proportions. As the news stories increased in frequency, they were elevated on the three newspapers' agenda, and the issues became known to a broader audience. Regardless of where the three newspapers stood on these issues, these specific instances are instructive in what they indicate about the media's role in apprising the public of the issues and to invigorate public involvement.

One conclusion from the data is that art controversies are more likely to become newsworthy when they relate to societal values. Given the frequency and amount of coverage allotted to arts policy reform themes, it is plausible that the media acted as conduits for promoting arts policy reform as they selectively presented discussions on the debate and advocated major shifts in cultural values. Issues and values were portrayed as the reporters interpreted the events within a certain context, suggesting a range of positions for their

audiences to assign their own meaning to the art controversies. On several occasions the importance of cultural values were largely overshadowed by the elements of conflict, pitting political and religious leaders values against arts community members' cultural values. By stressing cultural values and endowing them with greater relevance to the public funding issue, journalists were more apt to shape the perceptions of their audiences as well as their interpretations of the events surrounding the art controversies.

Previous studies of news framing of conflicts suggest that there may be sides to a controversy that are never covered by the media. Even when conflicts are given coverage, spokespersons in the news may not be representative of the sides they speak for, and their published views may not even be representative of their public positions (Fico & Soffin, 1995). While news sources initiated a portion of the news stories, the newspaper journalists created the bulk of the articles and made the events newsworthy. Audience perceptions of the events were more likely to be varied, as evidenced by the type of sources quoted in the news stories, how often they were quoted, and the neglect of reporters to cite citizens and religious leaders as sources. Arts community members were more influential on news content and had the opportunity to manipulate coverage. While these groups chose not to defend the artists' works or rights to freely express themselves, their membership and activity were prominent in the news coverage. Yet political factions also tactfully managed to garner press attention, discrediting the artists' works and informing the public about their positions on the NEA's grant policies and procedures. Perhaps, by quoting the arts

community groups and politicians, the news media assisted these sources in promoting their agendas and attracted the support of third parties.

Although this study revealed some interesting results and has useful implications regarding the relationship between news framing, agenda setting, and art controversies, the results must be interpreted in terms of their limitations. First, the present study does not investigate the coverage of art controversies by other mainstream media organizations such as broadcast news (e.g., ABC, CBS, and NBC) and news magazines (e.g., *Newsweek* and *Time*), therefore the findings are limited only to the specific media analyzed and cannot be generalized to other types of media. Broadcast media and news magazines should not be ignored in future studies.

Second, the census explored only two art controversies using two big city newspapers and one small town newspaper. The selection of the publications is not representative of how mid-sized newspapers and non-mainstream media frame new stories about art controversies. This type of study omits the exploration of key elements of agenda setting and framing, such as the news media credibility, the effectiveness of framing techniques, the impact of audience knowledge, and exposure in shaping the public agenda. Future studies should continue in the vein of this research, exploring how news coverage of the Mapplethorpe and Brooklyn Museum controversies compare to more recent art controversies such as the removal of Cosimo Cavallaro's chocolate statue at the Manhattan Lab Gallery and to explore whether the role of the news media and the patterns of news coverage changed. As art controversies persist, building on the current study may identify alternative or additional frames introduced

by the mass media since the Mapplethorpe and Brooklyn Museum controversies occurred. Does the coverage of such controversies differ in national newspapers when compared to the coverage of the newspaper serving the local community? Comparison of local newspaper coverage to larger newspaper organizations coverage of art controversies may show a different emphasis on topics and themes and may have a more urban focus.

In addition, while these findings demonstrate a number of trends in art controversy coverage, this study is limited in that it only analyzes news items that appeared in newspapers from 1987 to 2006. While undoubtedly news coverage about the controversies was prominent during this period, it does not consider how the news discourses changed or if these trends are applicable to other art controversies that occurred during these eras. Given the reoccurrence of art controversies, future research needs to examine whether news publications aimed at national audiences present any different type of news coverage than mainstream New York, Washington, and Columbus publications. An investigation into media representation of art controversies in other states would reveal whether the similarities and differences found in this study are representative of national news coverage of art controversies.

Third, some limitations of this study are related to data collection methods and the population of the sample. Since the articles were located by a limited number of keywords in electronic databases rather than by a hard copy search to capture a full range of events and data, there is a chance the use of additional keywords would yield a different number of articles. It may be possible that the electronic search conducted overlooked news coverage of events related to other issues or controversy activities. Future replications using other

populations and issues, however, are appropriate to further define the role of news media and the agenda-setting function in art controversy news stories.

A final limitation concerns the varying levels of agreement between coders on six of the 31 measures used in this study. Caution should be exercised in interpreting these findings, and future researchers should explore these effects with better analytical tools to confirm whether the findings accurately represent how the media portrayed these events in terms of article tone, terms describing the controversies and the artist's works, the number of themes used, dominant theme, and reason why the art controversies occurred. While this presented some limitations for the analysis, it also provides some insight into the different aspects explored for this study. Future researchers might use fewer points on the scales used to assess article tone and terms used to describe artist's work to confirm whether the news journalists were critical of the artists and their work. Measures used to assess the reasons as to why the art controversies occurred could be expanded to include the museum's decision to display the controversial works or loss of sponsorship and public support. Despite these limitations, this analysis provides a foundation for future research on news framing of art controversies. How and to what extent do the media portray art controversies for public consumption will most likely remain important questions to be answered by future researchers.

The use of newspaper data on art controversies assists in furthering the study of agenda setting and framing theories, lending evidence to the notion that that the media simply do not report the news; they construct news by modifying and selectively presenting claims on the subject. The outcome of this study thus provokes serious consideration of the

relationship between art controversies and the media with the hope of minimizing news framing distortion and encouraging a more realistic portrayal of these types of events in the future. It may be argued that these instances were unique to merit consideration. In this regard, it is worth considering the implications of placing restrictions on the types of art displayed in public institutions or denying funding to artists who rely on public funding. On one hand, it is a practical matter to preserve our culture; however, the media portrayal of the art controversies may be undermining the importance of the issues. Of course, there are many important questions on public opinions that cannot be addressed with the data obtained from this analysis and may be better addressed with other types of analyses. As an indispensable step in learning whether there are common patterns of effects across different audience members and the potential impact of framing effects on the public could be determined by analyzing audience responses and reactions to news stories on the art controversies. By applying alternative research methods, including personal interviews with news journalists, editors, publishers, principle participants, and representatives of various factions quoted in the articles, it would be possible to determine how they perceived their roles in the art controversies. What the audience does with the news, as well as how the journalists use the news, however, will be left for exploration in future studies.

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Appendix A

The following is an annotated appendix of news coverage of art controversies research. Accompanying this appendix is the time frame in which the search was conducted and is presented in the Sources Searched section. Current as well as earlier research studies have been included in the search, however some materials may have been overlooked due to availability and access constraints.

Empirical and rhetorical studies available in bound editions, non-book, and online forms are presented. The sources in this appendix are the result of an exhaustive search of the literature. References and footnotes were also examined for pertinent sources, yielding additional entries that would have been otherwise overlooked in the initial search. In addition secondary sources, such as editorials, speculative articles, theses, dissertations and books, have been included because of their relevance to the topic and are based on my personal evaluation of their practical, historical, and heuristic value. Each listing includes the author(s) name(s), the date of publication, titles, and publication information according to APA style standards.

The topic explored by the studies in this appendix was the relationship of news reporting to art controversies. Therefore, studies in which the focus of inquiry was other than news framing and agenda setting of controversies (i.e. media coverage of conflicts, news coverage of protests, news gate keeping, and social control in the newsroom) have been included because of their relevance to the topic.

Sources Searched

The following is a list of keywords and/or heading used for this search: agenda setting, art, art controversy(ies), art conflict(s), *The Columbus Dispatch*, Brooklyn Museum controversy, Cincinnati Contemporary Arts controversy, conflict(s), controversy(ies), culture war(s), framing conflicts, framing controversies, Mapplethorpe, mass media, media coverage, media framing, media portrayal(s), media presentation, National Endowment for the Arts, NEA, news coverage, news coverage of conflicts, news coverage of controversies, news framing, news framing of conflicts, news framing of controversies, news gate keeping, news media, newspaper coverage, news presentation, news reporting, *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, Olifi, press coverage, and print media.

The following is a list of sources searched using the keywords, headings, references, and footnotes mentioned above.

Abstracting Services (Dates are inclusive)

ComAbstracts, 1996-present

Sociological Abstracts, 1952-present

Bibliographies

Alterman, E. *What liberal media? The truth about bias and the news*. New York: Basic Books, c2003.

Ankney, R. N. *The influence of communication technologies in political participation and social interaction*. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, c2003.

Atschull, J. H. *Agents of power: The role of the news media in human affairs*. New York: Longman, 1984.

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Cohen, S. *The manufacture of news; social problems, deviance and the mass media*. London: Constable, 1973.

Conboy, M. *The press and popular culture*. [Electronic version]. London: Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002. Retrieved January 3, 2007 from <http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.rit.edu/lib/rit/Doc?id=10076777>.

Fallows, J. M. *Breaking the news: How the media undermine American democracy*. New York: Pantheon Books, c1996.

Gans, H. J. *Deciding what's news: A study of CBS evening news, NBC nightly news, Newsweek, and Time*. New York: Pantheon Books, c1979.

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Hachten, W. A. *The troubles with journalism: A critical look at what's right and wrong with the press*. [Electronic version]. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, c2005. Retrieved January 3, 2007 from <http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.rit.edu/lib/rit/Doc?id=10106599>.

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Mnookin, S. *Hard news: The scandals of the New York Times and their meaning for*

American media. [Electronic version]. New York: Random House, c2004. Retrieved

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January 3, 2007 from <http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.rit.edu/lib/rit/Doc?id=10130622>.

Sabato, L. *Feeding frenzy: How attack journalism has transformed American politics.*

New York: Free Press; Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada; New York:

Maxwell Macmillan International, c1991.

Sylvie, G. *Time, change and the American newspapers.* [Electronic version]. Mahwah,

NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002. Retrieved January 3, 2007 from

<http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.rit.edu/lib/rit/Doc?id=10084491>.

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Bibliographical dictionary of American journalism. New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.

Mass communications research resources: An annotated guide. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum

Associates, 1988.

Niven, D. *Tilt? The search for media bias.* Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002.

Computer Literature Search

Wallace Memorial Library, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York, December 5, 2006, December 6, 2006, December 15, 2006, December 22, 2006, December 30, 2006, January 3, 2007, January 13, 2007, and January 15, 2007. The following databases were searched:

Academic Search Elite via Ebsco, 1985-present

Arts and Humanities Search in FirstSearch, 1998-present

Communication & Mass Media Complete, 1974-present

Dissertations & Theses Full Text, beginning 1861

Educational Resource Information Center via Ebsco, 1996-present

JSTOR, 1971-present

MasterFile Select via Ebsco, 1990-present

OmniFile Full Text Select, 1995-present

Proquest Research Library, 1971-present

Research Library via *Proquest Direct*, 1971-present

Social Science Full Text, 1994-present

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Art Index/Abstracts/Full Text, 1989-present

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Index to Journals in Communications Studies Through 1990. Annondale, VA:

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MasterFile Select Index, 1984-present

Papers First via FirstSearch, 1984-present

Social Sciences Citation Index, 1991-present

Science Citation Index Expanded, 1965-present

Library Catalogs

Einstein Library Catalog, Wallace Memorial Library, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York, December 22, 2006, December 30, 2006, January 3, 2007, January 13, 2007, and January 15, 2007.

Library Information Bridge for the Rochester Area (LIBRA), Monroe County Library Catalog System, Rochester, New York, December 22, 2006 and January 3, 2007.

Appendix B: Codebook

The codebook consists of five parts that record information about the following variables: (1) prominence of theme; (2) presentation of issues; (3) frequency of news coverage; and (4) reported causes.

Coder	1=Holowczenko 2=Wescott
Publication	1= <i>New York Times</i> 2= <i>The Washington Post</i> 3= <i>The Columbus Dispatch</i>
Date of publication (code year published and actual date, e.g. December 1, 2006)	
Section article appears in publication	1=politics 2=arts and entertainment 3=supplement 4=special reports 5=opinion page 6=news in brief 7=local 8=national 9=other
Page position (only include page where article begins)	1=front page 2=other
Article length in number of words	1=100 words 2=101-200 words 3=201 or more words

Presence of byline	1=present 2=not present	
Identity of author/reporting source	1=staff reporter 2=critic 3-citizen 4=politician 5=religious leader 6=arts community member	7=attorney 8=editor 9=columnist 10=bureau 11=wire service 12=unknown
Headline (code title of news story)		
Headline topic	1=artist 2=artwork 3=exhibition 4=participant 5=agency	6=institution 7=court case 8=protest 9=controversy title 10=other
Tone of headline	1=highly supportive 2=somewhat supportive 3=neutral 4=somewhat critical 5=highly critical	
Tone of article	1= highly supportive 2-somewhat supportive 3=neutral 4=somewhat critical 5=highly critical	

Number of themes presented	1=one theme 2=two themes 3=three or more themes 4=none
Themes presented (select predominate theme)	1= censorship/First amendment rights 2=art policy reform 3=economic health 4=legal 5=other 6=none
Presence of graphic(s)	1=no 2=yes
Type of graphic(s)	1=photographic 2=illustration 3=not identified
Subject portrayed in graphic	1=protestor(s) 2=politician(s) 3=artist 4=artwork 5=religious leader 6=other
Controversy activity reported	1=social protest 2=legal debate 3=congressional matter 4=other

- Consequence presented
- 1=political consequence
 - 2=social consequence
 - 3=economic consequence
 - 4=legal consequence
 - 5=none
- Terms used to describe the artist's work
- 1=balanced
 - 2=favorable
 - 3=unfavorable
- Terms used to describe the controversy
(select one that is used explicitly
in article)
- 1=art war
 - 2=battle
 - 3=controversy
 - 4=dispute
 - 5=culture war
 - 6=debate
 - 7=conflict
 - 9=debacle
 - 10=commotion
 - 11=incident
 - 12=crisis
 - 13=affair
 - 14=fiasco
 - 15=uproar
 - 16=dispute
 - 17=brouhaha
 - 19=feud
 - 20=scandal
 - 21=legal battle
 - 22=other
- Issue presented
(select predominate issue)
- 1=government funding for the arts
 - 2=First Amendment rights
 - 3=Helms Amendment
 - 4=legal
 - 5=other

Values presented (select predominate value)	1=cultural 2=spiritual/religious 3=economic 4=political 5=legal 6=social 7=other	
Type of format (refers to genre of article)	1=feature 2=editorial 3=opinion letter 4=review 5=press release	6=interview 7=news story 8=column 9=op/ed 10=other
Frames presented	1=attribution of responsibility 2=conflict 3=consequences 4=values 5=other	
Dominant frame (select the predominate one)	1=censorship 2=public funding 3=obscenity laws	
Controversy topic mentioned in article	1=Mapplethorpe 2=Brooklyn 3=both 4=not mentioned 5=other	
Olifi's work mentioned in article	1=yes 2=no	

Mapplethorpe's work mentioned in article	1=yes 2=no
Stated reasons for art controversies (code the most mentioned reason)	1=censorship 2=cost of public funding 3=not mentioned 4=exhibition cancellation 5=obscenity charges 6=other
Source identified as responsible for causing controversy	1=Rudolph Guiliani 2=Dennis Barrie 3=Senator Helms 4=news media 5=Orr-Cahill 6=other
Source quoted (code first person quoted)	1=politician 2=religious leader 3=arts community member or affiliate 4=artist 5=unknown
Credentials of source quoted	1=art expert 2=legal advisor 3=other 4=none identified
Number of times source quoted (code first person quoted)	1=one time 2=two times 3=three or more times 4=never quoted

Footnotes

¹Intercoder reliability was calculated using Holsti's formula: $1R=2(C1,2)/C1 + C2$, where C1,2 is the number of agreements between the coders, C1 is the total number of coding decisions made by coder 1, and C2 is the total number of coding decisions made by coder 2. Intercoder reliability for each category is as follows: headline tone = .67, article tone = .25, number of themes = .58, theme = .58, graphic presence = .92, graphic type = .83, subject portrayed in graphic = .83, controversy activity = .67, consequences = .50, terms describing the artist's work = .33, terms describing the controversy = .33, values presented = .42, format type = .83, frames presented .33, dominant frame = .58, controversy topic = 1.0, Olifi mentioned = 1.0, Mapplethorpe mentioned = 1.0, reason for art controversy = .25, source identified for causing controversy = .83, source quoted = .75, source credentials = .67, and number of times source quoted = .58.

Table 1

Prominence of Theme and Presentation of Issues Comparisons Between Publications

Variable	χ^2	df	p
Section	422.789	5	.000
Page Position	333.093	1	.000
Article Length	12.275	2	.002
Byline Presence	233.954	1	.000
Author Identity	1355.026	9	.000
Headline Topic	540.257	9	.000
Headline Tone	7.650	2	.022
Article Tone	30.479	2	.000
Themes Presented	193.718	5	.000
Graphic Presence	77.896	1	.000
Graphic Type	389.483	2	.000
Graphic Subject	1801.211	7	.000
Controversy Activity	374.064	4	.000
Consequence	319.292	4	.000
Controversy Terms	1661.421	18	.000
Values	379.700	7	.000
Format	1764.244	9	.000
Frames	680.224	7	.000
Dominant Frame	311.497	4	.000
Controversy Topic	846.676	4	.000