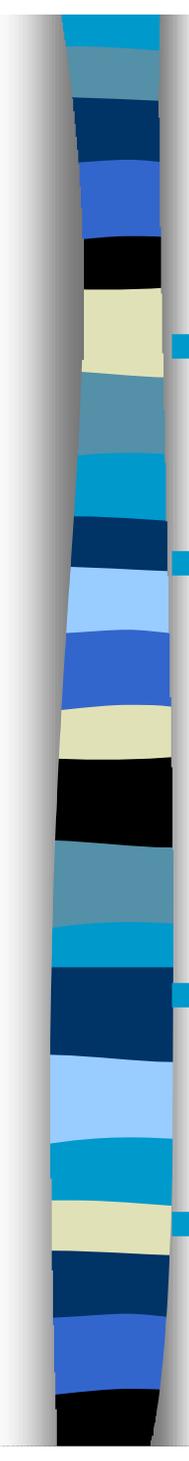


“Teenage Smoking”
A Problematic Social
Construction

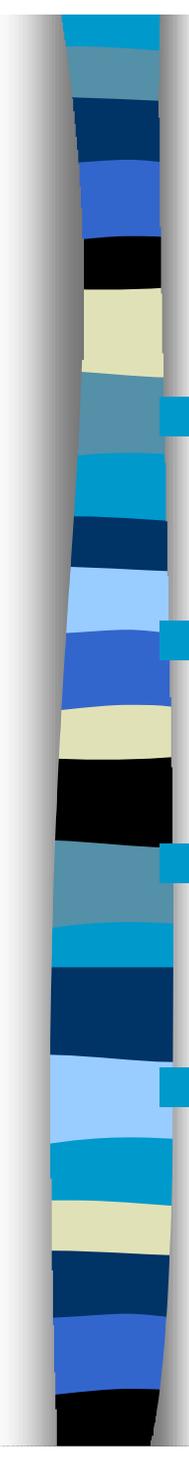


Katherine Clegg Smith
University Of Illinois at Chicago



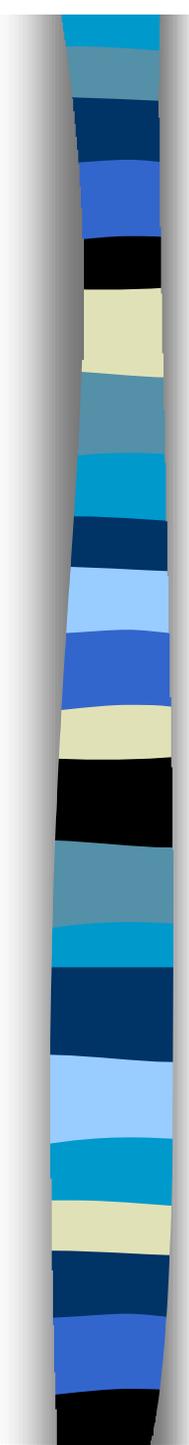
Background to this Presentation

- This research is preliminary and reflects only the author's personal opinion
- Part of ***Youth Smoking and the Media*** research project
Principal Investigator: *Melanie Wakefield*, PhD
Co-investigators: Frank Chaloupka, PhD. George Balch, PhD.
Brian Flay, DPhil. Lloyd Johnson, PhD. Sherry Emery, PhD.
Henry Saffer, PhD. Sandy Slater, MS.
- Administered by: Health Research and Policy Centers
University of Illinois at Chicago
- Funded By the **National Cancer Institute**
Grant# ROI CA86273-01



In this presentation I will address the following:

- The debate over a ‘youth smoking’ focus in tobacco control
- What can be learned from the ‘social problems’ literature?
- How are youth smoking issues portrayed in US newspapers?
- How might a ‘Youth’ focus influence attempts to reduce smoking levels?

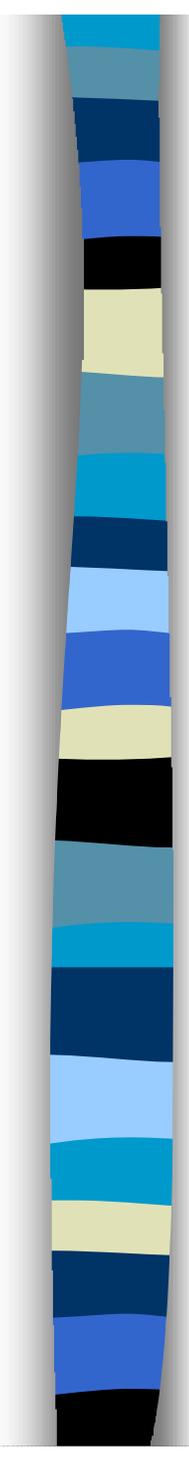


Youth Smoking is an important public health issue

- Centers for Disease Control estimate that 3000 young people become regular users of cigarettes every day

Approximately 80% of adult smokers started smoking before the age of 18 (CDC).

- In November 1998, 46 states signed the Master Settlement Agreement. This has provided more money for tobacco control efforts – many of which focus on youth.

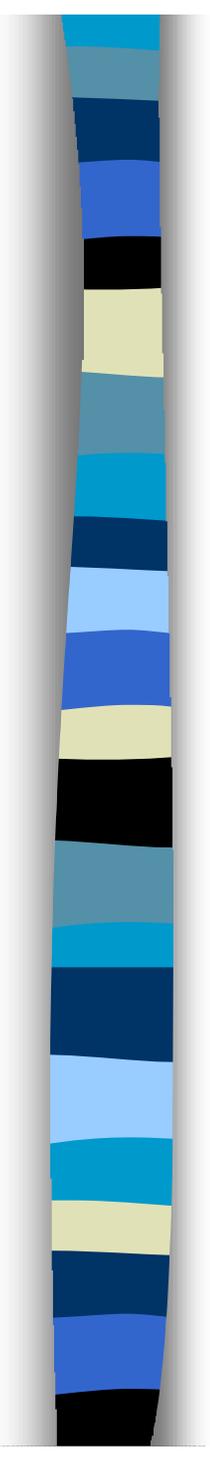


What can we learn from the 'Social Problems' literature?

- Social Problems are not simply reflections of 'fact' (Glassner, 1999)

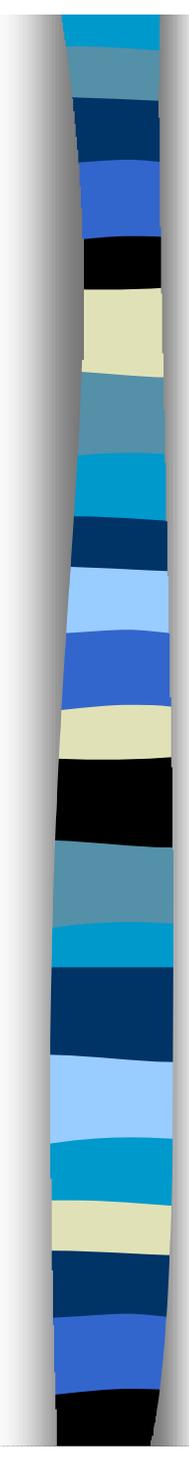
Social Problems are created by 'claims makers' (Linders, 1998) through the use of 'rhetoric' (Best, 1994).

- Children can be constructed as symbolic of society. Children reflect core values. They are '**sacred**' (Reynolds, 1995)
- It is easier to gain public support for action to 'protect' children than for general restrictions.



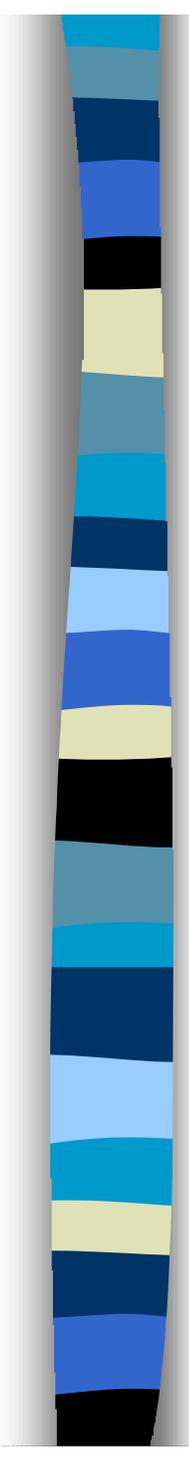
The Debate in Tobacco Control

- Should resources be focused towards policies that limit the opportunity for youth to smoke, or those that limit smoking generally?



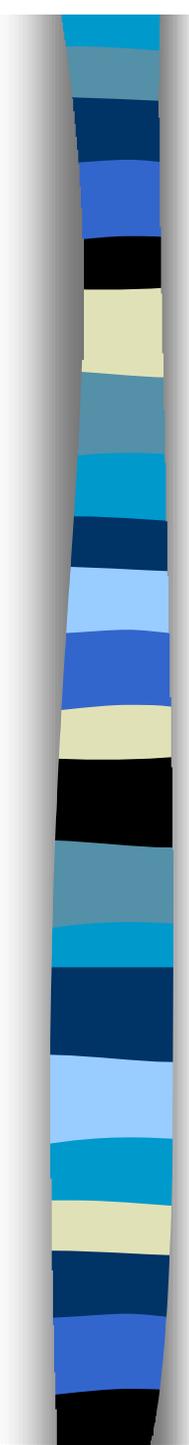
Tobacco Control Position 1: 'Kids' is a good place to start

- The prevention of disease is always preferable than any possible cure.
- Focusing on youth is a plausible short-term goal – get people on board.



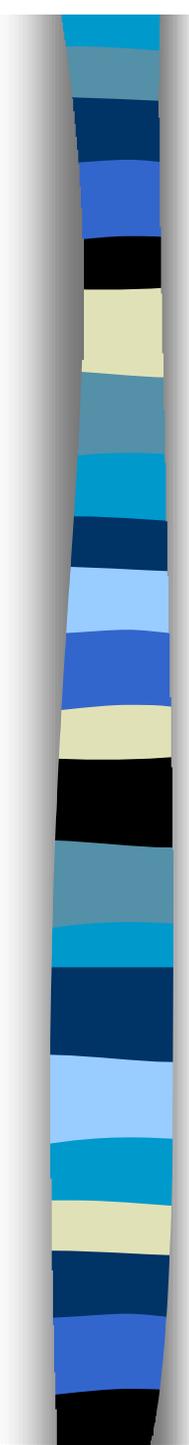
*Tobacco Control Position 2: We will get kids
to stop by getting adults to stop*

- Focusing on youth is just the path of least resistance.
- The most effective way to reduce youth smoking is to change the normative environment (Glantz, 2000)



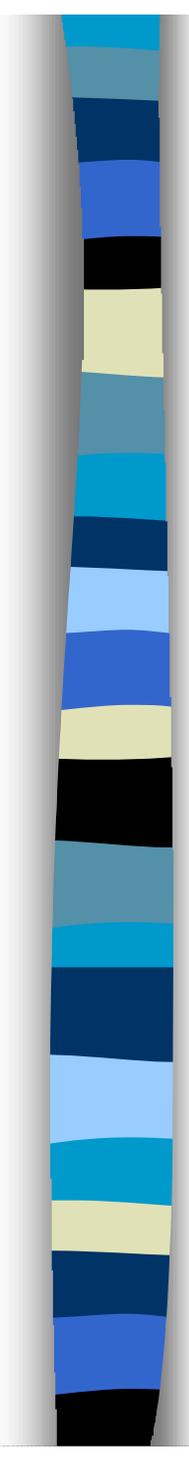
The Tobacco Industry as a Significant Actor

- Philip Morris has launched a multi-media ‘Youth Prevention’ campaign
- Communication to youth, parents, educators and policy makers – all in relation to youth prevention



Methods I

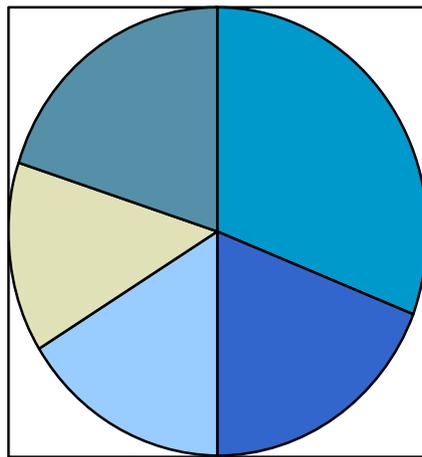
- Articles relating to smoking and tobacco were collected every other day from 336 US newspapers over a period of 6 months (October 2000- March 2001). Approximately 4000 articles
- From these, we extracted a subset of articles that included a 'youth' term in either the headline or first paragraph. 676 articles.



Methods II

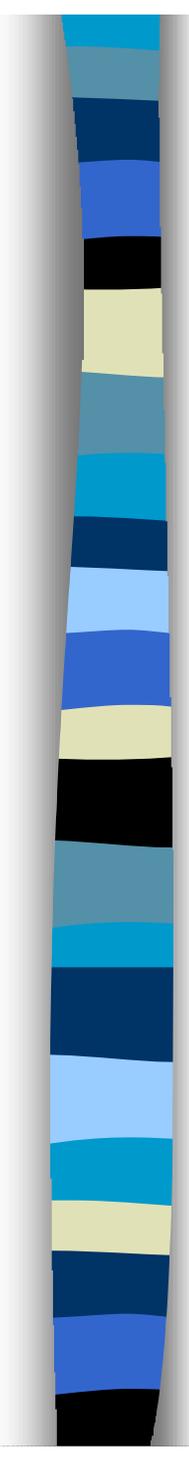
- A content analysis was performed on the youth articles focusing on the type of article, its placement in the newspaper, its overall theme and prioritized topics relating to tobacco control and whether or not it framed youth as vulnerable.

Results



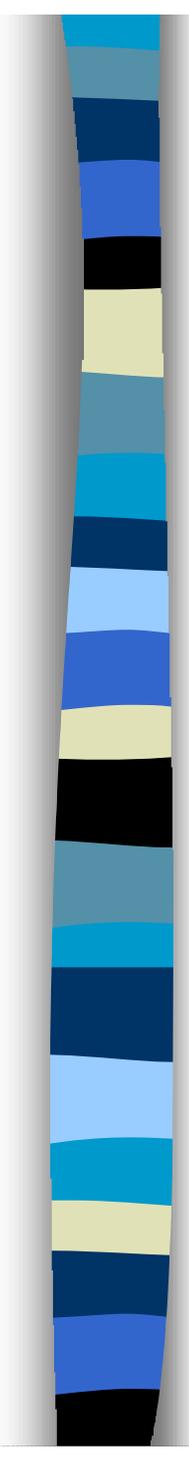
- Education and prevention
- Health Effects
- Tobacco Advertising
- Youth Access and Possession
- Other

- Approximately 700 of the 4000 (17.5%) articles focused on youth
- Nearly 1/3 of these articles dealt with education and prevention efforts



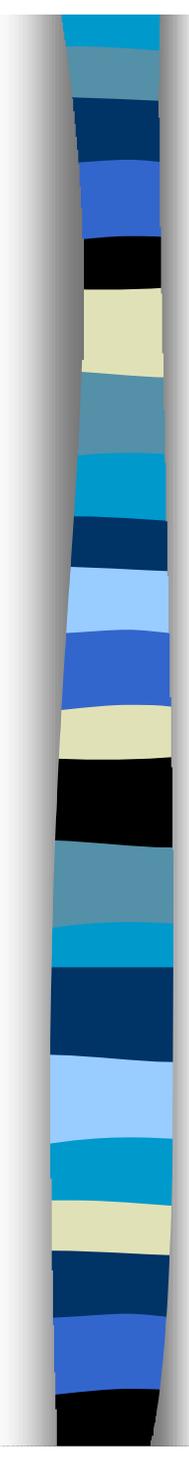
Results II

- 181 of the 218 articles coded for education and prevention focused specifically on youth
- 66 of these 218 articles framed youth as vulnerable (30.2%).
- This is significantly different from the general population (Chi Square 11.37 df 1, $p < 0.001$)



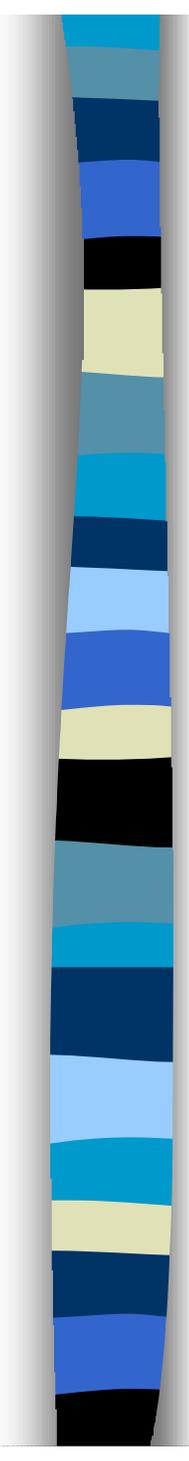
Results III

- Very few 'youth' articles were deemed important enough to be given front page coverage. Only 33 articles appeared on the front page.
- Education and prevention articles were the most likely to be given front page coverage (13 of the 33 articles or 40%) – but this is within the range of expectation given the proportion of education articles.



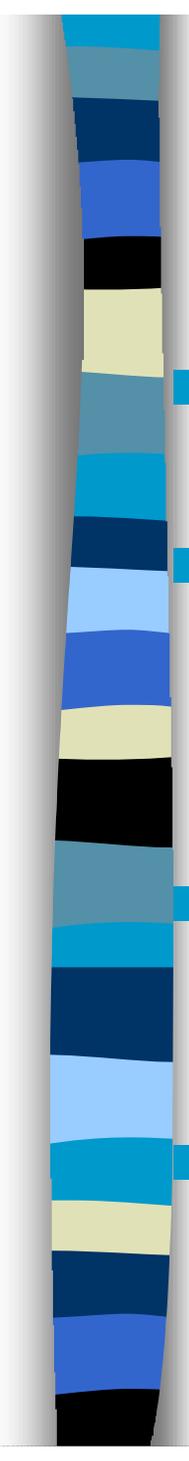
Results IV

- 156 of the 697 articles presented youth as vulnerable (in need of protection)
- Articles framed in this way most frequently gave primacy to the issue of youth focused education and advocacy. Articles giving primacy to youth education and advocacy were significantly more likely to frame youth as vulnerable. (Chi Square 9.02 df 1: $p < 0.01$)
- The topics of youth smoking behavior and ETS health and comfort also co-occurred with the youth vulnerability frame more frequently than would be expected by chance.



A very preliminary result.....

- The Louisville Courier-Journal published the greatest number of ‘youth focused’ articles by far during this period –16.
- The Louisville Courier Journal is from a tobacco growing state.
- Might a pattern emerge of a greater proportion of youth articles from such papers?



Conclusions

- Social problem can be typified in various ways. Definitions suggest the solution (Best, 1990).
- Ownership of a social problem is important and relies on resources and control of the rhetoric. Those who 'own' a problem will determine future actions.
- Ownership of 'Youth Smoking Prevention' is shared between a divided Tobacco Control Movement and the Tobacco Industry.
- Divided we fall. Youth Smoking Prevention stands to be defined by an actor with much to gain from ineffective efforts