

The Relationship between SmokeLess States Funding & News Coverage, 2002-2003*.

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***Formerly known as:**

Broad Strokes, Rich Detail:

A quantitative overview and qualitative case studies of newspaper coverage of tobacco policy, 2002-2003.

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The import of newspapers for Public Health

- Newspapers both reflect & promote how an issue is understood
- Newspapers serve as a forum for real debates to take place through editorials, letters to the editor, etc.
- Newspapers often serve as an ‘alternative electorate’ for policy makers (Mutz & Soss, 1997); can lead to the passage of important legislation (Otten, 1992).
- Newspapers serve as a source for other news media (e.g., radio, television).

What are ideal news-related outcomes?

- That tobacco control stories (and SLS stories) gained prominence
- That the SLS initiative helped to spark an engaged debate in the press
- That news coverage became more favorable to tobacco control goals in general, and SLS goals in particular

But how?

OUR DATA

- Every daily newspaper in the country (N=1,492)
- Clipping Service
- One-third sample by day
 - (N=40,397)

OUR CODING SYSTEM

(see handout)

- Prominence: front page, image, square inches
- Content: tobacco focus, tobacco company, lawsuit, article type, theme, topic
- Tone: Event, Opinion Slant

The present analysis

- Tobacco-focused articles only (n=35,556)
- News Variables:
 - SLS vs. non-SLS news articles
 - Prominence
 - Coverage of pro-tobacco control events
 - Pro-tobacco control opinions
 - Tobacco Industry references

The present analysis (continued...)

- Funding Variables:
 - Total **original** amount of RWJ Funds
 - Total **actual** amount of RWJ Funds
 - Total **original** amount of Matching Funds
 - Total **actual** amount of Matching Funds
 - **Deficit** between original & actual funds
 - Months of funding

Preliminary Findings: The News

On avg, articles about SmokeLess States Policies:

1. Are more likely to be on the front page;
2. Are written about more favorably (E & OS);
and
3. Are less likely to contain a reference to/
quote from a tobacco industry representative...

...than articles NOT about SLS policies

Preliminary Findings: Total Actual Funds & The News

On avg, the more actual funding a state received:

1. The more opinionated coverage was generated (and so creating an environment for debate); and
2. The more coverage of SLS Policies occurred;
3. The fewer references to the tobacco industry.

Preliminary Findings: Additional Years of Funding

On average, for every additional year of coverage:

1. The more likely it is that there will be coverage of a SLS policy;
2. The less likely it is that there will be a tobacco industry mention; and
3. The less likely it is that there will be coverage of a lawsuit.

Preliminary Findings: When Funding Fades Away

- On average, the greater the deficit in spending (diff. between original and actual spending):
1. The less likely tobacco-related articles are to be on the front page;
 2. The more likely the tobacco industry is to make it into coverage;
 3. The more lawsuits are covered;
 4. The fewer SLS stories are printed

But Wait! That's not all....

Additional projects being undertaken with these data:

- Analysis of tax coverage across the country (Clegg Smith, Siebel, Chaloupka)
- Variation in AP stories (Siebel)
- Analysis of letters to the editor (Siebel)
- Examination nationwide variation in coverage of farming, addiction & NYC workplace ban (Siebel)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was funded by a grant from
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:
“Tracking the Media and Policy Impacts of
State-Level Tobacco Control:
SmokeLess States Evaluation”.
Frank Chaloupka, Principal Investigator.
Grant # 41037