

# **The SmokeLess States Evaluation:**

Tracking Newspaper  
Coverage  
Nationwide

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# SmokeLess States: What is it?

- Nationwide initiative emphasizing tobacco control legislation in four areas:
  - Tobacco Excise Taxes
  - Environmental Tobacco Smoke Restrictions
    - State & local level, such as workplace bans, etc.
  - Medicaid Coverage of Cessation
  - Increasing State Allocations of MSA money for tobacco control efforts

# How is SmokeLess States Evaluated?

Three-pronged evaluation:

1. Strength of Tobacco Control (SoTC)

- CATI questionnaire of local tobacco coalitions

2. Legislative Tracking

- Local & State-level tobacco legislation

3. Newspaper Analysis

- Measure of media advocacy

# Previous Newspaper Monitoring Research

## American Stop Smoking Intervention Study (ASSIST)

(Stillman et al, 1999)

- 1991- 2000; tracked newspaper coverage of tobacco-related policy efforts from census of daily newspapers
- N=83,000 articles
- Variables: policy content; frame (pro tobacco control, etc.); article type (hard news, etc.); prominence (front page, etc.); origin of story (news wire, etc.)

# Previous Newspaper Monitoring II

## Youth Smoking and the Media (NCI)

(Clegg Smith et al, 2002)

- 2000-2003; tracking newspaper coverage of youth smoking issues
- Relating to Monitoring the Future sights
- Representative sample of newspapers (N=340)
- Built upon ASSIST evaluation, now collected in tandem with SmokeLess States

# SLS Data Collection: Contract clipping

- Nationwide media monitoring service
  - Clips and sends physical articles using our reading instructions
    - More comprehensive than ASSIST; all tobacco-related topics
  - Monitors every daily English-speaking newspaper in the country (N=1,447)
  - Five clipping houses around the country
  - Yields an average of 6,000 articles per month

# **SLS Data Collection: In-house archiving**

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- Filed by date
- Given a unique identifier
- Archived

# Trusting Someone Else

Clipping service claims to “catch” 85% of articles.

Some potential pitfalls to trusting someone else with data collection:

- Are they truly capturing 85%?
- Is the error random or systematic?
  - Are some states/newspapers more affected by error?
  - Is there a seasonal effect?

# Validation

Given these concerns, we are undertaking a short-term validation study.

- National clipping service
- 900 articles per month for three months
- Oversampled for small newspapers

# Aims in Evaluating SLS

1. Variance in coverage
  - variance in volume & content
  - within & across states
2. Trends in coverage over time
3. Prevalence of four substantive areas
4. Ultimately will measure efficacy of media advocacy

# The Coding Process

- Given volume (nearly 200,000 by the end of the grant), a one-third sample of articles is coded
- Coding Guide Book
- Four coders
- Inter-coder reliability (Kappa)
- Pre-Codes
- Refer Backs

# The Coding Scheme

## Three Types of Variables:

### 1. Prominence

- Front page, image, article size (square inches)

### 2. Content

- Theme (13 categories), Topic (35 categories)

### 3. Slant

- Event Slant & Opinion Slant (expands upon ASSIST)

## How can these data be used?

- Qualitatively – Textual analysis of a specific issue, as a case study: farming, harm reduction, ETS, etc.
- Quantitatively – News coverage as an outcome measure of SLS and other state-level efforts
- Quantitatively – News coverage as an explanatory variable affecting attitudes toward tobacco control policies as well as tobacco-related behaviors.

# Strengths

## Breadth & Scope

- By the end of the project our coded data will total approximately 65,000 articles
- Analysis at local, state and national level
- While large-scale evaluation is quantitative (and thus somewhat cursory), the breadth of data allows  
for smaller case studies to go in-depth.

# Weaknesses

## Cost

- \$200 per month + \$1.29 per *page* of article
- Further costs for student worker time, archive space

## Lag Time

- Volume means that there is an extensive lag time between receipt of the article and analysis

## Size

- Unclear how results would be affected if a sample of newspapers was drawn, rather than full census.

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