

## ArkPSA

Arkansas Political Science Association

---

Media Coverage of Tobacco Settlement Expenditure in Two States

Author(s): Catherine C. Reese and Patrick Hilson

Source: *The Midsouth Political Science Review*, Volume 15, Number 1 (2014), pp. 105-123

ISSN: 2330-6882 [print]; 2330-6890 [online]

Published by: Arkansas Political Science Association

Website: <http://uca.edu/politicalscience/midsouth-political-science-review-mpsrr/>

---



# Media Coverage of Tobacco Settlement Expenditure in Two States

**Catherine C. Reese**  
Arkansas State University

**Patrick Hilson**  
Arkansas State University

*We characterize media coverage of the 1998 Master Tobacco Settlement (MSA) in major newspapers in the states of Arkansas and Georgia during the 1997-2000 time period. We describe the extent of newspaper coverage of the MSA, identify the control frames and themes for related articles, and review trends related to media coverage of the MSA. We conducted a content analysis of daily non-editorial news articles from each state's major newspaper on 85 articles related to state-level MSA spending decisions from the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution from 1997-2000. Our results include the following: by far the most frequent theme in both states was the generation by the MSA of new revenue, with 95.0% of articles in Arkansas and 89.1% of articles in Georgia focusing on that topic. In addition, 45.7% of articles in Georgia mention the need for using MSA funds to help support tobacco farmers. The health effects of smoking are downplayed in both states, with the most frequent reporting being about the need to protect youth from tobacco. We found no articles with a dominant theme of secondhand smoke; only 5.1% of articles in Arkansas and 21.7% of those in Georgia had a dominant focus on the health detriments of smoking. The most frequent issue frame in each state was regarding the costs associated with tobacco. In addition, Georgia had three unique issue frames: farmers' rights, smokers' rights, and taxpayers' rights. Dominant frames in both states involved the costs associated with tobacco. There was no preeminent emphasis on either the rights of nonsmokers or the harms of smoking. Future discussion and evaluation of policy alternatives at the state level needs to be informed by knowledge of what to expect from the media and how links between dollars and public health outcomes might best be made to better serve the public interest. The gist of the public health message about smoking is being greatly deemphasized, while a great emphasis on money is clear and visible.*

## **Introduction**

In 1998, forty-six states reached a settlement with the four largest tobacco companies in the U.S., collectively known as Big Tobacco; Arkansas and Georgia were among those states. Since that time, Arkansas has become notable for being one of the few states that funds its tobacco control programs at any approximation of the rates established as guidelines by the

Centers for Disease Control. Georgia, on the other hand, has become known as one of the states that barely funds its tobacco control programs. Our goal is to utilize content analysis to determine the content of newspaper articles leading up to the expenditure of settlement funds in Arkansas and Georgia.

Today the state of Arkansas ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. in terms of tobacco control spending and this standing has been reasonably consistent over time; the state of Georgia, however, currently ranks 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation on tobacco control programming ([tobaccofreekids.org](http://tobaccofreekids.org)).

### **Importance of Media Analysis**

The mass media, defined as newspapers, television, radio and Internet, influences at a minimum the particular issues upon which we focus as individuals (McCombs 2014; Olper and Swinner 2013; Stromberg 2001; Tannahill 2010). Most analysts find that the media does not tell us how to think and does not specifically tell us what to think; rather, the media directs us toward areas of interest or in other words shapes public opinion by choosing some items rather than others upon which to focus (Tannahill 2010). The media does not determine public opinion, but has been widely held to influence it, particularly in the choice of what is focused upon (McCombs 2014). In other words, the media sets the agenda of public thought and public policy.

Some scholars have analyzed the effects of the media upon public policy across nations (Olper and Swinner 2013) and note that there is a greater impact of privately-held media on public policy; the U.S. differs from many other nations in that most media are privately- rather than government-owned or -run (Tannahill 2010). Thus, the United States is a propitious nation in which to study the influence of mass media on public policy.

Since the 1990s public health proponents have realized that media advocacy is a key to achieving their goals, even to the extent of including related costs in their organizations' budgets (Kenterelidou 2012; Long, Slater, and Lysengen 2006; Smith et al. 2005). Because the media determines the issues on which the public focuses, the media influences public thought and potentially behavior as regards public health issues (Dorfman 2003). As one article recommends, "Strategic media work is an integral part of modern public health practice" (Brunner, Fowlie and Freestone 2011, 1). Thus, it is important to systematically analyze media coverage on public health issues of the past in order to derive lessons for the future. As Harris et al. (2010)

reflect, “[I]t is important for tobacco control advocates to consider...themes in tobacco-related media coverage in a challenging tobacco control climate” (42).

Public health advocates and public policy scholars have noted of late a dilution in the tobacco control message. Specifically, the message used to be about tobacco being deadly to everyone, but moved in the 1990s to a focus on tobacco being a problem primarily as it pertains to youth (Lima and Siegel 1999; Menashe and Siegel 1998). Analysts thus worry about the shift in the public health message regarding tobacco control; in addition, researchers point to an inconsistency in the use of major themes and frames over time (Menashe and Siegel 1998).

### **Context: State-Level Tobacco Control in the Study Time Period**

All of the states that took part in the 1998 MSA were engaged in the following activities over the 1997-2000 time period: (1) discussing the potential benefits and drawbacks of an MSA for them, (2) deciding how to spend tobacco settlement funds, and (3) analyzing and sometimes altering resultant policy decisions. Media articles covering these decision-making processes in both Arkansas and Georgia had vastly dissipated by 2000. Specifically, in Georgia, Governor Roy Barnes had helped decide the fate of its tobacco settlement by February of 2000 (Saporta 2013), while in Arkansas, Initiated Act I was passed by the electorate on November 7, 2000 (Reese, Hewitt-Mann, and Hawkins 2012).

Although the master settlement was virtually national in scope, then, most action actually took place at the state level. Thus, it is extremely important to analyze state-level coverage of MSA-related decision making. Most prior research of this type, however, had focused on single nations (Kenterelidou 2012; Lima and Siegel 1999; Long, Slater, and Lysengen 2006; Smith, Wakefield, and Edsall 2006), multiple nations (Smith et al. 2005), and, occasionally, single states (Harris et al. 2010; Magzamen, Charlesworth, and Glantz 2001).

The state-level policy debates that took place as the states began to consider and then enact the fiscal allocation of their MSA monies are historically significant. After the national settlement was made in 1998, all 46 states that participated in the MSA were faced with an opportunity: some states initially enacted comprehensive tobacco control legislation, only to abandon it later as economic times became tougher. A few others focused on

enhancing public health and stuck with that perspective throughout the economic downturn. Still others did not ever seriously address their funds to any facet of public health (Reese, Hewitt-Mann, and Hawkins 2012). Thus, we expect the themes present in different states' debates over how to spend the money to differ.

We selected two states with different policy outputs in order to compare how the tobacco policy debate was couched in each. To our knowledge, although we model our analysis on a similar federal-level one (Lima and Siegel 1999), and there are a few single-state analyses (see Harris et al. 2010; Magzamen, Charlesworth, and Glantz 2001), and at least one comparing different nations (the U.S. and Australia, see Smith et al. 2005), there are no other content analyses comparing states on this topic.

Our focus turned to an interest in understanding the policy differences between these states. It is a central requirement of case study research that in order to try and generate understanding of a dependent variable, in this case level of tobacco control programming, one must ensure that there is some variation in said dependent variable (Yin 2009). Thus we are using a Most Similar Systems Design Study (MSSD). The states we selected – Arkansas and Georgia – share similar political, social and institutional structures. They are both southern and therefore relatively poor. Both are also fairly similar politically, in that they are presently moving toward Republican dominance and away from two-party competitiveness; both are relatively conservative according to common scales (Berry et al. 2010). Both are of the same political culture, the traditionalistic, which tends to support existing political structures (Elazar 1972).

Borrowing from comparative politics research, which has been historically more often utilized in comparisons of different countries, we apply the idea of MSSD here by determining and isolating factors that account for differences on how each of these states dealt with tobacco settlement issues. By examining the histories of each state as they dealt with tobacco money decisions, we hope to determine what factors led the states to adopt divergent strategies and programs. This research design is often used in seeking to identify features or variables that are different among similar cases, which account for the observed political outcomes (see Landman 2008; Mill 2006).

Thus, our central questions are: (1) Were the same tobacco issues deemed newsworthy in Arkansas and Georgia? (2) Did these issues change

over time? and (3) Was news coverage equally favorable toward tobacco control in both states?

### Use of Themes and Frames

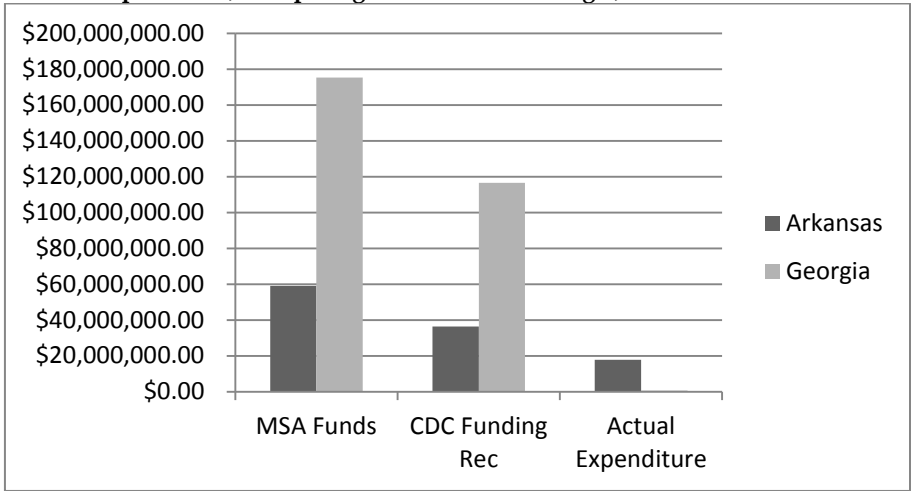
Media coverage of the national tobacco settlement – and its origins and aftermath – was extensive. We wanted to see if the same could be said of state-level coverage. In addition, we wished to ascertain whether different themes of coverage as well as frames of coverage looked different from one state to another. A *theme* that occurs during an article refers to specific content in a news article; for example, anti-tobacco advertising might be a theme, as might support for tobacco farmers. A *frame* refers to how tobacco is defined as an issue or problem. Lima and Siegel (1999) define frame as, “the way in which arguments were crafted to define the problem of tobacco in the debate” (247). The framing of tobacco control as an issue has been shown in the past to influence legislative debate (Jacobson, Wasserman, and Raube 1993; Menashe and Siegel 1998); the framing of public health issues in general has been shown to influence public opinion (Fine 1992; Vaughan and Seifert 1992; Wagenaar and Streff 1990).

### Methods

We present the results of a content analysis of debates over how to spend tobacco settlement money in two states, Arkansas and Georgia. We chose Arkansas because it is a state with a relatively positive history of spending tobacco settlement money on public health issues. We chose Georgia as a contrast, because it is a tobacco-growing state and one where the governor initially talked a great deal about spending settlement money for public health. Most of his plans eventually fell by the wayside, though, to the point where the state barely runs any tobacco control programs at all. These are two states with very different levels of tobacco control programming and related spending, as Figure 1 shows.

Tobacco control programs may encompass anything from state-run quitlines, which are phone numbers with counselors at the other end who endeavor to help people quit smoking, to television-based public awareness campaigns of the health effects of tobacco, to enhanced enforcement of youth access laws, to financial support of research and development activities aimed at helping citizens with quitting and/or never starting. Many tobacco

**Figure 1: MSA Funds, CDC Programming Recommendation, and Actual Tobacco Control Expenditure, Comparing Arkansas and Georgia, for FY 2013**



control programs focus on prevention and cessation for youth; a great spur of the MSA itself was the popularity of the Joe Camel figure with the young and the resultant way that youth smoking rates had been increasing.

We used the primary state-level newspaper in each case for our analysis, the one located in the capitol and with the largest statewide circulation. For Arkansas, that is the *Democrat-Gazette* and for Georgia, the *Journal-Constitution*. We chose states that had accessible online archives. Both the Atlanta paper and the Little Rock paper are searchable using Lexis/Nexis. We viewed the time period 1997-2000 and reviewed available articles from the online archive. We chose the time period 1997-2000 because the MSA was reached in 1998 and all of the states decided what to do with the money in the two years following; in addition, they began discussing the possibility of funds and how to spend them in the year prior to the settlement, when it became apparent that a settlement might be reached. We chose news articles only and did not review editorials, consistent with the approach utilized by Lima and Siegel (1999). The particular search term we employed was "tobacco settlement." This process resulted in 50 articles for each state; however, due to some slight errors in our process, we had to exclude a few articles that were not about this particular tobacco settlement and so ended up using 46 articles from Georgia and 39 from Arkansas.



Each of the 85 articles were read and coded by each of two reviewers and analyzed for content according to a set list of content themes and a set list of issue frames. We initially discussed each theme and frame and then each of us coded one state's articles. Our next step was to swap states and code the other's state. We then discussed and resolved all discrepancies between our results. This was the identical approach used in the article we are replicating, by Lima and Siegel (1999).

Lima and Siegel (1999) used themes in the following categories: financial, public health policy, and civil justice. We did not use the civil justice categories here because they did not apply; Lima and Siegel were looking at language at the time of the MSA, and we are primarily focused on state-level activity immediately following that time. Thus we are left with two categories of themes, financial and public health policy. The public health policy themes are (1) reducing youth access to tobacco, (2) anti-smoking advertisements, (3) adult quitting programs, (4) secondhand smoke, and (5) industry advertisement restrictions. The financial themes are (1) new revenue, (2) increased cigarette taxes, (3) industry penalties, and (4) financial support for tobacco farmers. When either of us identified any of these themes in an article, we recorded that instance. Furthermore, we also identified the theme that we thought was the dominant one in the article. So, for example, if one article mentioned the increased revenue Arkansas was expecting from the settlement and along with that discussed the public health problems associated with secondhand smoke, our task was to decide which of those themes was dominant.

Our second task was to identify the major ways in which tobacco is framed as a public issue according to the newspaper articles. Our frames were largely adapted from Lima and Siegel (1999); they, in turn, took many of theirs from Menashe and Siegel (1998). The frames identified by Lima and Siegel (1999) were as follows:

- Kids – tobacco is a problem because minors should not smoke
- Corporate liability – tobacco is a problem because it kills around 500,000 people per year
- Drug delivery device – tobacco is a problem because it delivers the drug nicotine and is addictive (in part due to industry manipulations of nicotine components and levels)
- Costs of smoking – tobacco is a problem because it costs society a lot of money in health care costs and lost productivity
- David versus Goliath – tobacco is a problem because Big Tobacco has lots of money and other resources and the rest of us do not

- Outside intruder – tobacco is a problem because Big Tobacco tries to make laws through involvement by its interest groups and influence on politicians
- Smoking is harmful – tobacco is a problem because it hurts people
- Deceit – tobacco is a problem because the big firms are lying and deceitful to the American public
- Non-smokers’ rights – tobacco is a problem because 80% of Americans do not smoke but they are still exposed to secondhand smoke, with poor health effects

We needed to add several categories of frames for purposes of our study because the nine above did not quite cover everything we ran across. It was immediately apparent that we needed new categories of frames for the state of Georgia’s stance on tobacco farmers’ rights, smokers’ rights, and the general public/taxpayers’ rights. So, we add those:

- farmers’ rights – tobacco control is a problem because it infringes on farmers’ rights to grow tobacco
- smokers’ rights – tobacco control is a problem because it infringes on adults’ rights to smoke tobacco
- general public/taxpayers’ rights – tobacco control is a problem because its advocates are taking away money that should rightfully be returned to the taxpayers of the state

We were not expecting to have articles that portrayed tobacco control itself negatively, but that was the case in the state of Georgia. Similarly to the way we handled the themes and major themes, we also identified frames and major frames; that is, we identified all ways in which tobacco (or, conversely, tobacco control) was identified as an issue or a problem. Following that, we chose the frame that we believed most closely reflected the dominant frame of the article. We then double-checked each other and resolved discrepancies through discussion.

## Results

*Themes.* By far the greatest focus in both states was on the new revenue generated by the MSA for the states, with 95.0% of all articles in Arkansas focusing on new revenue and 89.1% of all articles in Georgia focusing on new revenue (see Table 1). Some indications of interest in increasing cigarette taxes are also present, as is the tobacco industry’s financial penalties and support for tobacco farmers. The most striking difference in the states is in Georgia’s focus on financial support for its tobacco farmers, with 45.7% of

all articles mentioning this, while only 7.7% of articles in Arkansas refer to a problem for tobacco farmers. Arkansas is not a tobacco-growing state; Georgia, on the other hand, has been in the top ten in production states for some years.

**TABLE 1: Number of Times Mentioned for Major Financial and Policy Themes in Newspaper Coverage of the Debate over the Spending of Tobacco Settlement Money, 1997-2000**

Theme*	Arkansas		Georgia	
	No. of Times Mentioned	Percent	No. of Times Mentioned	Percent
<b>Financial aspects</b>				
New revenue	37	95.0	41	89.1
Increase cigarette tax	8	20.5	2	4.4
Tobacco industry penalties	5	12.8	7	15.2
Support tobacco farmers	3	7.7	21	45.7
<b>Public health policy aspects</b>				
Reduce youth access to tobacco	9	23.1	21	45.7
Anti-smoking advertisements	6	15.4	10	21.7
Adult quitting programs	8	20.5	9	19.6
Secondhand smoke	1	2.6	1	2.2
Industry ad restrictions	5	12.8	13	28.3
<b>Number of articles</b>	39		46	

\*Please see Methods for explanation of policy themes. Note that more than one theme is nearly always mentioned per article so numbers do not add to number of articles and percentages do not add to 100.

Regarding public health aspects of the tobacco settlement, 23.1% of all articles mentioned reducing youth access to tobacco in Arkansas, compared with a higher 45.7% of articles in Georgia. Reducing youth smoking was one of the central components of the national-level settlement. Restrictions on the tobacco industry's advertisements were apparently more interesting than exposure to secondhand smoke, particularly in the state of Georgia, where 28.3% of articles mentioned industry advertisement restrictions. Overall, the health effects of smoking are significantly downplayed compared to the attention given to the financial aspects of the settlement.

When regarding dominant themes, as shown in Table 2, the difference is even more striking; specifically, 94.9% of articles in Arkansas and 78.3% of articles in Georgia focused on the financial aspects of settlement spending and the remainder on public health policy. We found no articles with a major or dominant theme of secondhand smoke and almost none on programs to help adults quit smoking. The largest category of health policy is on reducing youth access to tobacco, at least in the state of Georgia.

**TABLE 2: Dominant Financial and Policy Themes in Newspaper Coverage of the Debate over the Spending of Tobacco Settlement Money, 1997-2000**

Dominant Theme*	Arkansas		Georgia	
	No. of Times Theme	Percent	No. of Times Theme	Percent
<b>Financial aspects</b>				
New revenue	32	82.1	21	45.7
Increase cigarette tax	3	7.7	1	2.2
Tobacco industry penalties	1	2.6	4	8.7
Support tobacco farmers	1	2.6	10	21.7
<b>Financial subtotal</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>94.9</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>78.3</b>
<b>Public health policy aspects</b>				
Reduce youth access to tobacco	1	2.6	6	13.0
Anti-smoking advertisements	0	0.0	1	2.2
Adult quitting programs	1	2.6	0	0.0
Secondhand smoke	0	0.0	0	0.0
Industry ad restrictions	0	0.0	3	6.5
<b>Policy subtotal</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>21.7</b>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.2</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*Please see Methods for explanation of policy themes.

**TABLE 3: Number of Times Issue Frames were used in Newspaper Coverage of the Debate over the Spending of Tobacco Settlement Money, 1997-2000**

Frame*	Arkansas		Georgia	
	No. of Times Mentioned	Percent	No. of Times Mentioned	Percent
Kids	15	33.5	21	45.7
Corporate liability	9	23.1	11	23.9
Tobacco is a drug	3	7.7	4	8.7
Costs associated w/ tobacco	32	82.1	32	69.6
David v Goliath	4	10.3	2	4.4
Tobacco=outsider	1	2.6	1	2.2
Smoking=harmful	15	38.5	13	28.3
Industry=deceitful	2	5.1	1	2.2
Nonsmokers' rights	2	5.1	0	0.0
Farmers' rights	0	0.0	5	10.9
Smokers' rights	0	0.0	4	8.7
Public/Taxpayers' rights	0	0.0	11	23.9
<b>Number of articles</b>	<b>39</b>		<b>46</b>	

\*Please see Methods for explanation of issue frames. Note that more than one theme is nearly always mentioned per article so numbers do not add to number of articles and percentages do not add to 100.

*Frames.* The issue frames used to define tobacco as a public problem are first addressed in Table 3. In the national analysis conducted by Lima and

Siegel (1999) the framing of tobacco as an issue affecting kids or youth was quite significant. We see that is the case here as well, with the Arkansas articles using kids as a frame 33.5% of the time and the Georgia articles using it 45.7% of the time. But by far the largest category of frame is that associated with the costs associated with tobacco; specifically, in Arkansas these costs were mentioned in 82.1% of the articles and in 69.6% of articles in Georgia. The other striking issue in the comparison is the presence of the three negative-action frames that were only pertinent to Georgia; in other words, the farmers' rights (10.9% of articles), smokers' rights (8.7% of articles), and public/taxpayers' rights to the money (23.9% of articles).

When we turn to the information in Table 4, we see that the major or dominant theme of each article reveals additional information. That is, the vast majority of articles in Arkansas use the costs associated with tobacco as their central or dominant theme (61.5%). This is also a common dominant frame in Georgia, with 30.4% of articles using it, but not as prevalent as in Arkansas. Strikingly, in neither state is there any emphasis on the rights of nonsmokers (0.0% and 0.0%) or much emphasis on the harms of smoking (20.5% and 4.3% of articles, respectively), although the emphasis is much stronger in Arkansas. The other interesting finding is that public or taxpayers' rights are the dominant frame in 23.9% of articles.

**TABLE 4: Dominant Issue Frames used in Newspaper Coverage of the Debate over the Spending of Tobacco Settlement Money, 1997-2000**

Dominant Frame*	Arkansas		Georgia	
	No. of Times Frame	Percent	No. of Times Frame	Percent
Kids	0	0.0	7	15.2
Corporate liability	6	15.4	6	13.0
Tobacco is a drug	0	0.0	0	0.0
Costs associated w/ tobacco	24	61.5	14	30.4
David v Goliath	1	2.6	1	2.2
Tobacco=outsider	0	0.0	0	0.0
Smoking=harmful	8	20.5	2	4.3
Industry=deceitful	0	0.0	0	0.0
Nonsmokers' rights	0	0.0	0	0.0
Farmers' rights	0	0.0	5	10.9
Smokers' rights	0	0.0	0	0.0
Public/Taxpayers' rights	0	0.0	11	23.9
<b>Number of articles</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>99.9</b>

\*Please see Methods for explanation of issue frames.

In terms of whether the frames and themes demonstrate any changes over time, we find that for the most part, they do not exhibit trends, with a

few notable exceptions. As regards themes, in Arkansas the emphasis on the settlement as representing new revenue grew over time to the point where it was the only dominant theme by the year 2000. In Georgia, there was somewhat of an emphasis on financial assistance for tobacco farmers in 1999. Regarding frames, the costs associated with smoking were heavily emphasized in 2000, just as the Initiated Act 1 was to be voted on in Arkansas. Finally, in Georgia the right of the public to have the settlement monies returned to them was somewhat strongly emphasized in 1999.

## Discussion

We analyzed the content of a total of 85 newspaper articles in two state-level newspapers, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, from 1997-2000. Our goal was to describe media content as accurately as possible and note any trends therein. We found that media content did vary in key ways in these two study states.

In both Arkansas and Georgia there was a great deal more focus on financial aspects of the settlement money than on potential health impacts. Ultimately in Arkansas various public health-related groups, all of whom, it must be noted, stood to gain financially from its passage, sponsored the placement of Initiated Act 1 (2000), also known as the Tobacco Settlement

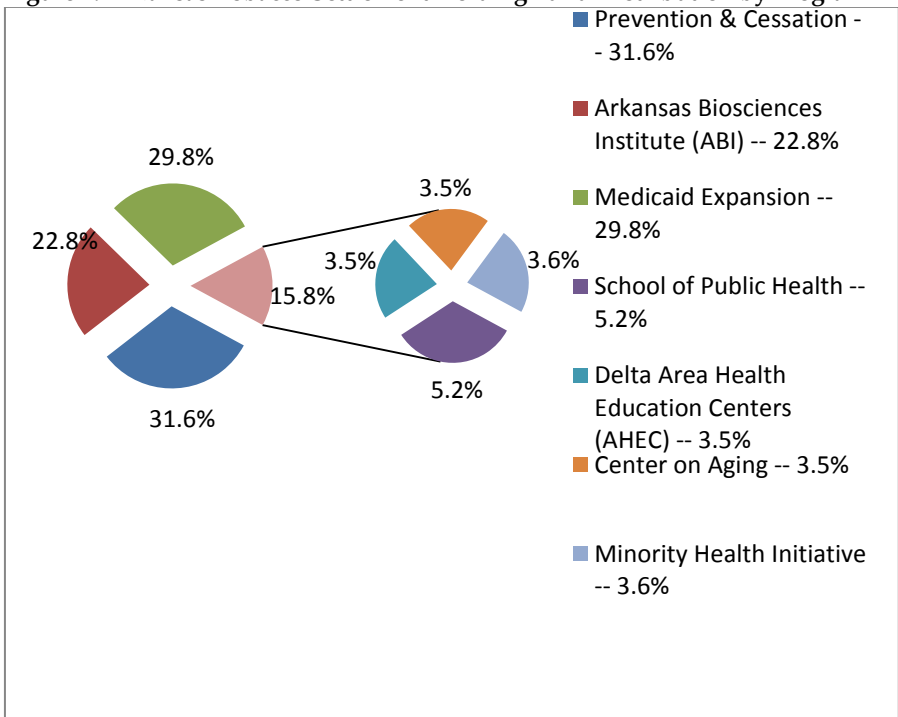
**Table 5: Timeline from MSA Through Passage of CHART Plan in Arkansas**

Time	Events
Nov 1998	MSA made between attorneys general of 46 states and 4 largest U.S. tobacco companies
Feb 1999	Arkansas Center for Health Improvements (ACHI) publishes position paper setting forth such principles to guide usage of MSA funds as, "All funds should be used to improve and optimize the health of Arkansans." (Farley et al. 2004, 7)
1999-2000	Meetings held to develop consensus on spending MSA funds Principles stated in ACHI report accepted by governor and legislative leaders Coalition for Health Arkansas Today (CHART) formed to help ensure the acceptance and passage of ACHI plans
Feb 2000	Governor calls special legislative session to pass the plan – CHART passes Senate but not House
Spring 2000	Governor decides to let the people of the state vote on the CHART plan
Nov 2000	Initiated Act 1, the "Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Proceeds Act of 2000" passes with 64.3% of the people voting for the act

Source: Derived from Farley et al. 2004

Proceeds Act, on the statewide ballot, where it passed with 64.3% of the vote (ballotpedia.org). This Act described specifically how MSA monies were to be spent in the future. Table 5 shows a timeline representing the decision making process for MSA funds in the state of Arkansas. Figure 2 shows how the funds were designated to be spent in Arkansas. Today the state of Arkansas ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. in terms of tobacco control spending and this standing has been reasonably consistent over time; the state of Georgia, however, currently ranks 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation on tobacco control programming (tobaccofreekids.org).

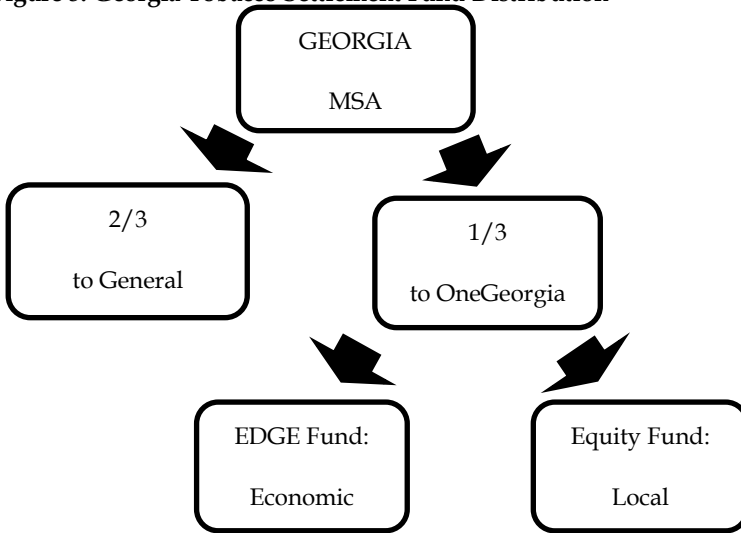
**Figure 2: Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Holding Fund Distribution by Program**



In Georgia, history shows that the governor initially pledged to spend all MSA money on public health and tobacco control (Schneider 2008), but later reneged on that promise. Figure 3 shows the general path that tobacco settlement spending took in the state of Georgia. The most striking thematic difference between the states is in the Georgia media's attention to the financial needs of the state's approximately 1,000 tobacco farmers and their surrounding communities.

Overall, we are struck by how weak the public health message seems in the media in both states compared with the “here’s more revenue” theme. Decisions about how to spend the MSA monies were the most important public health issue debates of our time. From our reading of media coverage,

**Figure 3: Georgia Tobacco Settlement Fund Distribution**



Source: Derived from Schneider, Craig. “Settlement Dollars: State Use of Tobacco Funds Gets Low Marks.” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* Wed, November 19, 2008, pp. 1-3 online. See also <http://www.onegeorgia.org/programs>

though, the public health message associated with said monies was extremely weak, if not entirely absent. For example, no articles had a dominant focus on the health effects of secondhand smoke. If future debates should arise, the public health community needs to be aware that media coverage is severely lacking regarding public health.

Regarding issue frames, Lima and Siegel (1999) noted the dominance of the “kids” frame. Our study, on the other hand, finds a much greater emphasis on the costs associated with tobacco, a phenomenon we label the financial domination of public health. Nowhere is there a message about tobacco’s responsibility for killing people. No one seems to characterize the argument as being about people’s lives; rather, most messages seem to be about dollars, in a quite impersonal manner.



Lima and Siegel (1999) note that media coverage of the national settlement was not about making any broad societal changes, although it would seem that the occasion was ripe for such a movement, and tobacco, at least for adults, is described as an issue of personal choice. They note the “virtual absence of nonsmokers’ rights” (199, 252) as an issue. To their observation we add that not only did we note a lack of concern with the rights of the approximately 78% of U.S. adults who do not smoke, but also we found greater concern expressed, at least in the state of Georgia, with smokers’ rights, tobacco farmers’ rights to grow their crop (the state Agriculture Commissioner referred to a farmer’s “right to grow tobacco” in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on September 21, 1999) and the right of the taxpayers to directly get back the monies they had originally paid in taxes via Medicaid to help those sick or dying from health effects of smoking.

## Conclusion

Were the same issues emphasized in these two states? For the most part, they were, but we believe the differences between the two states to be significant. Specifically, both states emphasized the financial aspects of the MSA to a much greater degree than the health-related dimensions of the issue. However, in Georgia the heavy emphasis on support for tobacco farmers, combined with the state’s concern for the rights of the general public to receive the settlement dollars in addition to the rights of smokers to choose to smoke, really distinguish it from Arkansas, where none of those elements are present.

Were the issues emphasized the same over the four-year study period? For the most part, they were, with a few major exceptions. In Arkansas, there was a heavy emphasis on the costs and new revenues associated with the MSA just prior to the vote on Initiated Act 1. In Georgia, there was a strong emphasis on the right of the public to have the settlement money returned to them and the right of tobacco farmers to be compensated for the loss of their crop.

Was media coverage surrounding the passage of the Master Settlement Agreement equally favorable toward tobacco control in both states? No; specifically, media coverage was more favorable toward tobacco control in Arkansas than in Georgia. Even though in neither state was there much of an emphasis on the public health aspects of tobacco control, and in both states there was much more emphasis on the financial implications of the

settlement, overall coverage was more amenable to state-level public health-related action in Arkansas.

We acknowledge that the classification process by nature is subjective and that these two states' findings may not generalize to the other 48 states. This research is exploratory and points to the need to conduct additional state-level analyses in order to draw more generalizable conclusions. However, we believe that the way public health issues--such as smoking--are framed may influence health policies. Future evaluation of policy alternatives must be informed by knowledge of how the relationship between the media and public health outcomes can best together serve the public interest. If it is possible for better decisions to be made about how to spend public health dollars, in an era when the public health message related to smoking has become steadily eroded, in a time when lives might be saved or improved by our decisions, then we must inform those decisions to the best of our abilities.

## References

- Ballotpedia.org. 2000. "Arkansas Initiated Act 1(2000)."
- Berry, William D., Richard C. Fording, Evan J. Ringquist, Russell L. Hanson, and Carl E. Klarner. 2010. "Measuring Citizen and Government Ideology in the U.S. States: A Re-appraisal." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 10(2): 117-135.
- Brunner, Wendel, Kate Fowlie, and Julie Freestone. 2011. "Using Media to Advance Public Health Agendas." Available here from Contra Costa, California Health Services, Public Health Division: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cclho/Documents/UsingMediaToAdvancePHAgendas.pdf>
- Dorfman, Lori. 2003. "Studying the News on Public Health: How Content Analysis Supports Media Advocacy." *American Journal of Public Health Behavior* 27 (Suppl 3): S217-S226.
- Elazar, Daniel J. 1972. *American Federalism: A View from the States*. 2nd ed. New York: Harper and Row.
- Farley, Donna O., Matthew Chinman, Elizabeth D'Amico, David J. Dausey, John Engberg, Sarah B. Hunter, Lisa R. Shugarman, Melony E. Sorbero. 2004. *Evaluation of the Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Program: Progress from Program Inception to 2004*. Pittsburgh, PA: Rand Corporation.
- Fine, T.S. 1992. "The Impact of Issue Framing on Public Opinion Toward Affirmative Action Program." *Social Science Journal* 29: 323-334.
- Harris, Jenine K., Sarah Shelton, Sarah Moreland-Russell, and Douglas A. Luke. 2010. "Tobacco Coverage in Print Media: The Use of Timing and Themes by Tobacco Control Supporters and Opposition before a Failed Tobacco Tax Initiative." *Tobacco Control* 19: 37-43.
- Jacobson, P.D., J. Wasserman, and K. Raube. 1993. "Effect of contract framing, motivation to quit, and Self-Efficacy on Smoking Reduction." *Journal of Health, Politics and Policy Law* 18: 787-819.
- Kenterelidou, Clio. 2012. "Framing Public Health Issues: The Case of Smoking Ban in Greece, Public Health Policy Framing Equals Health Framing of Public Policy?" *Journal of Communication in Healthcare* 5(2): 116-128.
- Landman, Todd. 2008. *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics*. New York: Routledge, Inc.

- Lima, Julie C. and Michael Siegel. 1999. "The Tobacco Settlement: An Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of a National Policy Debate, 1997-98." *Tobacco Control* 8: 247-253.
- Long, Marilee, Michael D. Slater, and Lindsay Lysengen. 2006. "U.S. News Media Coverage of Tobacco Control Issues." *Tobacco Control* 15: 367-372.
- McCombs, Maxwell. 2014. *Setting the Agenda: Mass Media and Public Opinion*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco: Wiley.
- Magzamen, Sheryl, Annemarie Charlesworth, and Stanton A. Glantz. 2001. "Print Media Coverage of California's Smokefree Bar Law." *Tobacco Control* 10: 154-160.
- Menashe, Claudia L. and Michael Siegel. 1998. "The Power of a Frame: An Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Tobacco Issues—United States, 1985-1996." *Journal of Health Communication* 3: 307-325.
- Mill, John Stuart. 2006. *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill. Vol. VIII*. Toronto: The University of Toronto Press.
- Olper, Alessandro and Johan F.M. Swinner. 2013. "Mass Media and Public Policy: Global Evidence from Agricultural Policies." *World Bank Economic Review* 27(3): 413-436.
- Reese, Catherine C., Christy Hewitt-Mann, and Valeria Hawkins. 2012. "Have Our Settlement Funds Gone Up In Smoke? The Master Settlement, Use of Referenda and Tobacco Growing Status Ten Years After: A Four-State Comparison," *The Midsouth Political Science Review* 13(2): 81-104.
- Saporta, Maria. 2013. "Former Gov. Roy Barnes: State Has Made Strides Versus Cancer." *Atlanta Business Chronicle* March 29, available at <http://saportareport.com/blog/2013/03/former-gov-roy-barnes-state-has-made-strides-versus-cancer/>
- Schneider, Craig. 2008. "Settlement Dollars: State Use of Tobacco Funds Gets Low Marks." *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* November 19: 1-3 online.
- Smith, Katherine Clegg, Yvonne Terry-McElrath, Melaine Wakefield, and Russil Durrant. 2005. "Media Advocacy and Newspaper Coverage of Tobacco Issues: A Comparative Analysis of 1 Year's Print News in the United States and Australia." *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* 7 (2): 289-299.
- Smith, Katherine Clegg, Melaine Wakefield, and Elizabeth Edsall. 2006. "The Good News about Smoking: How Do U.S. Newspapers Cover Tobacco Issues?" *Journal of Public Health Policy* 27(2): 166-181.

- Stromberg, David. 2001. "Mass Media and Public Policy." *European Economic Review* 45: 4-6.
- Tannahill, Neal. 2010. *THINK American Government*. Boston: Longman.
- tobaccofreekids.org. 2014. *Broken Promises to Our Children: The 1998 State Tobacco Settlement 15 Years Later*. Washington, DC: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. accessed 8.17.2013.
- Vaughan, E. and M. Seifert. 1992. "Variability in the Framing of Risk Issues." *Journal of Social Issues* 48: 119-135.
- Wagenaar, A.C. and F.M. Streff. 1990. "Public Opinion on Alcohol Policies." *Journal of Public Health Policy* 11: 189-205.
- Yin, Robert K. 2009. *Case Study Research Design and Methods*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: Sage.

