

Social Construction of Reality
Media Framing of the Tobacco Issue over Time

Wanda Luen-wun Siu
Assistant Professor
School of Journalism and Communication
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Paper presented in the Mass Communication Division
of the International Communication Association
Germany, June 2006

Social Construction of Reality

Media Framing of Tobacco Issue over Time

The issue of tobacco and health has been at the top of U.S. public health agenda for over 50 years. The first warning of tobacco related illness was raised in 1953, when then-Surgeon General LeRoy E. Burney commented that "the risk of lung cancer could best be eliminated by the elimination of smoking."¹ Both the tobacco industry and the public health agency were busily collecting evidence on smoking and cancer. The tobacco industry conducted the scientific research overseas', for example, Philip Morris had a laboratory called Inbifo in Europe. Tests by painting tar on mice to explore the association between tar and cancer were carried out.² The tobacco industry was accused of destroying research documents that were unfavorable. In one of the internal documents presented in the 1998 Minnesota trial, one memo mentioned, "1. Ship all documents to Cologne...2. Keep in Cologne...if important letters or documents have to be sent, please send to home --- I will act on them and destroy."³

The row between tobacco companies and the public health sector started to emerge in 1964, when the Federal Advisory Committee's report on "Smoking and Health" was released.⁴ According to the report, "Cigarette smoking is causally related to lung cancer in men; the magnitude of the effect of cigarette smoking far outweighs all other factors...in view of the continuing and mounting evidence from many sources, it is the judgment of the committee that cigarette smoking contributes substantially to mortality from certain specific diseases and to the overall death rate."⁵

Informed by the theory of social construction of reality, research for this paper examined media framing of the tobacco issue over time. According to James Carey (1988), "What persons create is not merely one reality but multiple realities. Realities cannot be exhausted by any one symbolic form, be it scientific, religious, or aesthetic."⁶ Construction of meaning has been called negotiation involving acting, playing and signification (Goffman, 1959, 1974, 1981). Hall (1999) suggested that "meaning is something given through the image depicted...what is the meaning of IRA...a contested question...we need to know the history, assessment, participants viewpoints...there is no one true fixed meaning...representation is the constitutive of the event." Within a social system, symbols are conveyed through discourse. Institutions aid legitimization and domination of particular discourses, reinforced by economic institutions controlling allocation of resources (Giddens, 1984).

The tobacco issue has long signified major health crisis in the U.S. Over the years, the tobacco industry has fought an uphill battle with the government and the public sector over the definition of one reality --- whether smoking cause cancer. The definition of the tobacco issue has changed over time. In 1964, while the Surgeon General report expressed that there was a strong association between smoking and cancer, the tobacco industry claimed that there was no conclusive evidence. In 1998, the definition of reality in the Minnesota trial was whether the tobacco industry committed consumer fraud by withholding research results on the harmful effects of smoking.

In light of the intensity of the public health crisis over the years, it is of great importance to analyze how the media have framed the smoking and health issue over time. Research for this paper attempted to determine whether there is a difference in media frames between newspapers of different ideologies in the coverage of the tobacco issue. Does newspaper ideology make a difference in the reporting of the issue of smoking and health? Does newspaper coverage of the tobacco issue change over time? It was expected that a newspaper that is closely associated with the business community would portray the tobacco industry in a more positive manner in the coverage of tobacco issue as the target audience of the newspaper is mainly corporate executives. For example, according to the Mendelsohn affluent survey in 1999, the Wall Street Journal ranked first in the coverage of top management

executives and millionaires and enjoyed the highest readership in the business sector. Moreover, it is expected that media frames of the tobacco issue will change over time as mounting scientific evidence demonstrates the causal link between smoking and cancer. For example, individuals were held responsible for smoking related illness in 1964. In 1998, tobacco industry were held responsible for smoking-related death because they were charged with withholding information about the research results on the harmful effects of smoking.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY AND FRAMING OF HEALTH INFORMATION

The literature on social construction of reality argues that reality as constructed rests on four basic assumptions: (1) Reality "does not present itself objectively" to the viewer, it is understood through human experience; (2) categories of language are determined by "social interactions" in force at a particular time; (3) how reality is defined is determined by the "conventions of communication"; (4) communication behaviour constitutes the social construction of reality (Gergen, 1985:266-275).

Hall (1999) comments that meaning can never be fixed. People have "conceptual maps" that organize and assign meaning to events. Meaning is expressed through language and representation. "Meaning needs a discourse to make it meaningful... without language there is no representation, no meaning" (Hall, 1999). Power enters into language to fix meaning (Hall, 1999). Reality is "the result of a particular way of

constructing reality. Definitions of reality are sustained and produced through all those linguistic practices by means of which selective definitions of the real are represented. But representation is a very different notion from that of reflection. It implies the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping: not merely the transmitting of an already existing meaning, but the more active labor of "making things mean" (Hall, 1982:64). Other scholars like Goffman perceive that people take an active role in the social construction of reality. Individuals are actors, using a "theatrical metaphor," performing in front of others in a series of strips. The "interactional settings" where communication activities occur are the "stage" and "frame." Frames can be conceptualized as the schema that facilitate the interpretation of real world events.

News is regarded as a form of social construction. According to Gitlin (1980:7), media frames, "largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us to rely on their reports." Just as there can be competing frames with varying degrees of prominence in stories, there are "metaframes or subtexts that go beyond a single news story" (Roeh, 1989:159). What gets included or excluded in the media report? What are the schemas of the media reports? Bennett addressed these questions by proposing that there are four kinds of information bias in news: "personalization," dramatization, "fragmentation," and "authority-disorder bias" (2001:35-38). As such, biases can be considered as a form of social construction. Gamson and Modigliani commented that

there are signifying devices in news reports. The authors explain:

Media discourse can be conceived of as a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue. A package has an internal structure. At its core is a central organizing idea, or frame, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue...This frame typically implies a range of positions, rather than any single one, allowing for a degree of controversy among those who share a common frame.⁷

Entman suggested that there are two levels of news frames: (1) mentally stored principles for information processing, and (2) characteristics of the news text. For example, cold war frames imposed on international affairs may act as information processing schemata. News frames are embodied in the "keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images emphasized in a news narrative" (Entman, 1991:6-25). What is prominent in the news story is important in identifying media frames. Several actors contribute to the framing process, including the reporter as the narrator of the event and the sources quoted by the reporter (1991:6-25). As such, the media determine whether people notice and how well they understand, remember, evaluate and finally act upon a problem (Entman, 1993:54).

Some studies on media framing have examined the relation between media frames of health message and public perception. Vanderford and Smith (1996) explored the relation between public perception and media coverage of the silicone breast implant controversy. The authors concluded that the media may have exerted a substantial influence on public knowledge and attitude towards the implant. Results

showed that more negative attitudes towards the implant issue were shown among those people who relied on media as the only source of health information. Conversely, more positive attitudes were found in subjects who had silicone implants and had access to multiple sources of health information (friends and medical experts). It was concluded that the narrative in media about implant risks played an important role in public perception of implant risk. Plastic surgeons and medical experts claimed that the media report on the implant was biased and that media "sensationalized the issue" and over-represented implant problems (1996:110-131). The authors concluded that the episodic nature of news reporting failed to provide enough information to the public for judging silicone implants, let alone interpreting health risks of them (1986:190-207). The media failed to provide a comprehensive picture to balance risks with benefits and linked silicone-specific illness to general surgical risks.

Other studies framing of health issues focus on the way disease is represented in media coverage. Different frames were found in the same newspapers across different news sections. Beharrell (1993) examined British national newspaper and tabloid coverage of AIDS over 34 months and found a wide divergence between official health education messages and opinions conveyed in the press. Inconsistency appeared between editorials and regular news columns in the same newspapers. While the government messages targeted both heterosexuals and homosexuals, editorials dismissed official viewpoints by framing AIDS as a "plague" caused by irresponsible

individuals, such as "queers," "whores," and "junkies." Media reports failed to draw a clear distinction between AIDS and HIV and offered no balanced perspective for the reader. The authors found three major determinants of press framing of a health-care issue: political consideration, editorial/journalist dynamics and market segmentation.

These three factors interacted to produce various representations of the illness across different newspapers' content. Alternative viewpoints appeared more frequently in signed columns. Conversely, official sources dominated regular news columns.

Hilgartner (1999) showed that media reports deleted important information from a scientific study on the causes of cancer. Similarly, Uusitalo et al. (2000) found that when reporting on antioxidants in the Finnish press, the journalists sensationalized antioxidants and described their effects in vivid terms. Metaphors were used to describe the mechanism of antioxidants (2000:77). Scientific observations of inconclusive results were mentioned as facts while research results on the health effects of antioxidants are still inconclusive. Overall, studies on media framing of health issues suggest that media have different frames for a given health topic.

METHOD

Informed by the theory of social construction of reality, research here examined the relationship between ideology of print media and media frames in the coverage of 1964 Surgeon General report and 1998 Minnesota trial. Gamson suggested that "frame analysis offers a way of specifying the relationship by focusing on the relative

prominence of competing frames as a measure of outcome. For example, if one wants to know whether media mergers make a difference, one can compare the prominence of potentially relevant news frames before and after such a merger" (1989:160). This study employs framing analysis to examine if there is any agreement between two news media of different ideology covering the same events (Surgeon General report and Minnesota trial) over time. There are two research questions:

- I. How does the New York Times differ from the Wall Street Journal with regard to the frames used during the 1964 Surgeon General report and the 1998 Minnesota trial?
- II. How do the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal coverage change over time (concerning the 1964 Surgeon General report and the 1998 Minnesota trial)?

Addressing the way to analyze issue and conflict, Cohen, Adoni and Nossek (1993) proposed three dimensions of conflict: complexity, intensity and solvability. Complexity refers to "the number of parties to the conflict, the issues involved in it, as well as its history, antecedents, duration, and possible consequences" (1993:118). Intensity refers to the "attitudes and behavior of parties to the conflict" (1993:119). The more intense the conflict, the more the verbal and physical violence. Solvability relates to the "willingness of the parties" to solve the conflict (1993:119). Another way to analyze conflict is to explicate the frames, themes and symbolic devices used in news coverage. Gamson (1981) suggested that there is a "frame" in any issue or conflict. Frame refers to a "package" composed of "framing and reasoning devices" (1981:80).

Eight types of framing and reasoning devices named are-- "metaphors," "exemplars," "catch-phrases," "depictions," "visual images," "roots," "consequences" and "appeals to principle" (1981:81,82). While framing devices organize the elements of a frame into a whole picture, a reasoning device divides the issue into different parts, explicating causes and consequences (1981:158). Different ways of reporting any incident by selecting some bits of information and not others embed hidden bias in news content.

The Surgeon General's report in 1964 and the Minnesota tobacco trial in 1998 are two landmark events in the tobacco issue in the United States. Surgeon General's report represents the first official report that announced a possible causative link between smoking and cancer. The Minnesota trial is the court case against the tobacco industry that yielded the highest compensation for smoking-related illness of smokers.

The Gamson (1981) and Cohen et al. (1993) model was used in analysis. The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal were selected for study of coverage of the tobacco issue. As a national newspaper enjoying large circulation, the New York Times reflects the mainstream opinion and liberal view in American society. On the other hand, the Wall Street Journal is a national financial newspaper that caters to the interest of the business communities and has a conservative orientation.⁸ All headlines, subheads and body texts of news articles that mentioned the 1964 Surgeon General report and 1998 Minnesota trial were read. Taken together, a total of 79 articles were

collected (41 from the Wall Street Journal and 38 from the New York Times) for the 1964 Surgeon General report. As regards the 1998 Minnesota trial, 53 articles were collected (28 from the New York Times and 25 from the Wall Street Journal).

Gamson's model regarded "interpretive packages" as the core of a schema for issue interpretation, with eight symbolic devices explicating the "frame" and "position" of the "interpretive package." On the other hand, Cohen proposed that conflict could be analyzed along the dimensions of complexity, intensity and solvability. For this study, three stages were identified in the Surgeon General report and in the 1998 Minnesota trial -- cause, process and consequence. Cause was defined as the antecedent events leading to the event. For example, the carcinogenicity of tobacco causes lung cancer. Process refers to the development of the event and consequences are both the short and long-term effects of the event. The process of smoking addiction can be attributed to the conditioning of reflex. When individuals are addicted to smoking, there are harmful short-term and long-term effects. There were symbolic devices that manifested the intensity and themes of the issue, and such themes in turn contributed to the overall frame of an issue. Headlines, sub-heads and body texts of the news articles were thoroughly examined to identify metaphors, depictions, generalizations and principles adhered to that contribute to cause, process and consequences of the events. Metaphors were figurative representations of something in question, for example, "disease detectives" were analogies of epidemiologists investigating the

relation between smoking and cancer. Depictions were modifiers that reflected the theme of an issue. For example, calling the Surgeon General's report "the cornerstone of any indictment of smoking" symbolized that the smoking issue was a war game between the tobacco industry on one side and government and public health experts on the other. Generalizations were typical illustrations of a theme. Drawing a parallel between the Surgeon General's report to "Romans fought malaria" in which epidemiologists made mistakes underlined tobacco industry's suspicion of the validity of the Surgeon General's report which drew conclusions largely from epidemiological studies. Principles adhered to referred to the values underlying the theme, for example, the principle of press freedom underlying the theme of government's legitimacy to regulate cigarette advertising.

RESULTS

The New York Times: Surgeon General Report

One theme was death: The fact that smoking causes cancer was depicted as "a national catastrophe" and "peril" to the U.S. Against the backdrop of the death threat, the Surgeon General said, "the time had come to start a national effort to persuade smokers to quit the habit."⁹ The metaphor of passing the death "verdict" on cigarette smoking was caused by the Surgeon General's report that smoking cigarette injected a "carcinogen" that adversely affected body functions. "[Smoking was the] most important cause of chronic bronchitis, increasing the risk of death from that disease and from

emphysema...in all seven studies, coronary artery disease is the chief contributor to the excess number of deaths of cigarette smokers over nonsmokers with lung cancer uniformly in second place."¹⁰ The Surgeon General's report was generalized to earlier findings by French doctors who cited the relation between cigarette smoking and cancer.¹¹ Even though smokers were alarmed by the warnings from the Surgeon General, many of them were defiant saying, "Listen, you gotta die from something, right?..." and "We got nothing to worry about."¹²

Another common theme was the health scare. The scare of tobacco smoking was triggered by the Surgeon General's report. "It is the judgment of the committee that cigarette smoking contributed substantially to mortality from certain specific diseases and to the overall death rate." ¹³ How long did the public health scare last? It lasted for a relatively short period of time, with mixed response from smokers. Some said they were frightened and others said smoking could not do much harm to their "strong lungs".¹⁴ As a result of the public scare, cigarette sales volume fell slightly. Only the smoking pattern had changed -- from cigarette to cigar and from buying a carton of cigarettes to buying a singlepack. Tobacco companies remained optimistic over the sales of cigarette amid the health scare by generalizing the present crisis to the transitory public fear in 1953. But now, the public health authorities depicted an ominous scenario for smokers, calling the "danger grave despite per capita drop in consumption."¹⁵ Against the backdrop of health scare, the government adhered to the

principle of protecting public health while smokers appealed to personal freedom to justify smoking.

A third theme was that smoking is a habit, not addictive: The Surgeon General's report defined smoking as a habit rather than an addiction. "The overwhelming evidence points to the conclusion that smoking--its beginning, habituation, and occasional discontinuation--is to a large extent psychologically and socially determined. This does not rule out physiological factors, especially in respect to habituation, nor the existence or predisposing constitutional or hereditary factors."¹⁶ Tobacco smoking was generalized to the consumption of opium in western countries and ginseng root of China.¹⁷ As such, personal choice underlay the habit of smoking.

Another theme was modern warfare: economic battle in science: The cause of this battle was ignited by the Surgeon General's report citing a strong association between smoking and cancer. The report recommended regulating advertising in print and broadcast media. The late 1960s Johnson Administration, appeared to side with the Surgeon General but stopped short by delegating the authority to regulate tobacco advertising to the FTC. In essence, the Johnson Administration was prudent in judging the Surgeon General's report, saying that the report had not been made a government report and careful deliberations were needed.¹⁸ The tobacco industry and the American newspaper publishers association challenged the legitimacy of the FTC in regulating

tobacco advertising. "Mr. Smith [General Manager of the American newspaper publishers association] assailed [the government] for setting up a market news wire service with a made-to-order apparatus for government propaganda...it was the duty of newspapers to fight for freedom under law."¹⁹ Appealing to the principle of press freedom, the tobacco industry had the full backing of the newspaper association. To improve the image of the tobacco industry and pacify smokers' fears of this health hazard, the tobacco industry leaders said they "may step up TV advertising [and] the aim is to offset effect of report."²⁰ On the other hand, tobacco growing states also feared economic difficulties if the government regulated tobacco advertising. "They [tobacco state leaders] asked the commission not to threaten the economic welfare of millions who depend on the tobacco industry on the basis of what they termed inconclusive evidence that smoking poses a health hazard."²¹ In this way, the tobacco battle [health hazard in smoking] was intertwined with national economic interest.

The Wall Street Journal: The Surgeon General Report

Death: As regards the death theme, the Wall Street Journal presented two-sided view of the Surgeon General's report: while saying cigarette smoking had a strong association with death, there was still "a major gap" in scientific understanding of smoking and health. It reinforced the idea of the death threat as tentative and inconclusive. Based on the inconclusive scientific research, the news report depicted

that cigarette smoking "is a health hazard...to warrant appropriate remedial action."²²

On the theme of the health scare, the coverage depicted that both the cigarette manufacturers and the public were scared by the Surgeon General's report which cited links of smoking to various forms of cancer. The tobacco industry "nervously [was] awaiting the [report]...[fearing] multi-million dollar damage claims by smokers who have developed lung cancer."²³ The reports downplayed the effects of the Surgeon General's report. "Cigar makers expect health scare will win the cigaret puffers"; "U.S. Surgeon General's report spurs sales"²⁴; "Dealers say cigaret sales decline, many view the trend as temporary."²⁵ The tobacco industry also "taught" smokers how to ward off the death threat: "You don't have to inhale to enjoy a cigar."²⁶ News reports also persuaded wives of the beneficial effects of smoking: "A good cigar can calm a man down...make your life more enjoyable."²⁷ Reports also generalized the health scare to the crisis confronted by the cigar makers in 1962 "when the U.S. banned imports of Cuban products, including tobacco. The ban hit the cigar industry hard...but cigar makers overcame the problem."²⁸

Smoking is a habit, not addictive: Smoking was framed as a habit rather than an addiction. Quoting directly from the Surgeon General's report, the Wall Street Journal portrayed smoking as habitual consumption with beneficial effects [relaxation]. Reports appealed to the principle of individual choice.

Modern warfare: war of words: News reports carried criticism challenging the legitimacy and authority of the FTC to regulate tobacco advertising. "To further obfuscate the issue, Dr. Terry also cast doubt on the Federal Trade Commission's authority to implement its proposed new cigaret ad restrictions."²⁹ During the heated argument of the tobacco issue, reports raised doubts about the scientific trustworthiness of epidemiological studies that suggest the possible causal link between smoking and cancer. "[They] charged that statistical association methods are fallacious as a means of establishing causation of a disease by any single factor. The same techniques can be used to prove that smoking prevents suicide, accidents and diabetes."³⁰ A metaphor like "Romans fought malaria" characterized the fallacy of epidemiological studies.³¹ The cause of the war over tobacco was attributed to the government who changed the rule of the game by delegating the FTC to regulate tobacco advertising. Reports portrayed tobacco industry as protesting FTC's handling of tobacco issue. "The FTC has no legal authority to issue such rules...the rules would hurt cigaret sales and causes economic hardship in tobacco-growing areas...the FTC is moving too quickly; more research is needed."³²

The New York Times: 1998 Minnesota Trial

Accusation (conspiracy): The principle underlying the conspiracy theme was the "[tobacco industry] is a renegade industry, which has placed profit ahead of the health of its customers."³³ "Our one all-consuming ambition is to create wealth."³⁴ These

depictions set the stage for the conspiracy theme. Depictions referred to the key mastermind of a former tobacco company employee who conspired with the research scientists in selecting and suppressing research results to protect the tobacco industry. Mr. Osdene "[a skeleton key to Philip Morris] not simply a patron of science, but also a filter and suppressor, helping shift sensitive research abroad, avoiding crucial studies and, possibly, destroying documents."³⁵ "Mr. Osdene recommended that a trade group's research be carefully planned such that the results obtained should not be able to harm the industry...among the topics he said to avoid were developing new tests for carcinogenicity and attempts to related human disease to smoking."³⁶ "I will act on them [sensitive research results] and destroy."³⁷

Accusation (deception): News reports framed the tobacco industry as deceiving the public by refusing to acknowledge that the industry engaged in youth marketing. News reports unraveled the deception --- "Saying that he was ashamed and horrified, the chief executive of Philip Morris was presented with a parade of internal documents showing that the company kept close tabs on smokers ages 12 to 18, handed out promotional T-shirts at beaches, and believed its future to be dependent on attracting young smokers."³⁸ Reports also depicted the motive [principle] of the tobacco industry. "The evidence shows...[tobacco industry] placed profit ahead of the health of its customers."³⁹ As a result, the tobacco industry lost support from Congress and finally was defeated in the tobacco trial.

The Wall Street Journal: 1998 Minnesota Trial

Plainview -- hiding information: The Wall Street Journal presented a plain picture of the way the tobacco industry hid information that was unfavorable to it. The cause of this theme was attributed to "Tobacco companies used lawyers to hide data" and the consequence was "a state judge ordered tobacco companies to release 39,000 internal documents to lawyers for Minnesota."⁴⁰ News reports depicted the tobacco industry as facing a nightmare when the company's internal documents were presented in court. The process of hiding information came from a "gentleman's agreement among the major tobacco companies not to conduct internal research about the health hazards of smoking, while simultaneously issuing public assurances that the health risks of smoking were unproven."⁴¹ In this connection, "R.J. Reynolds had an internal system in the '60s to remove certain research data."⁴² The purpose of hiding sensitive documents was to prevent the release of data that could be used against the tobacco industry in court.

Sympathy for the tobacco industry -- lonely fighter betrayed by ally, suppressed by the government and the lack of fortune: Liggett was framed as the defector who left the tobacco alliance at a critical point and sided with the state. "The lawyers [Liggett Group] the renegade cigarette maker that has broken with the industry's united legal front, made public its damning internal documents."⁴³ The state was portrayed as gaining an

upper hand over the tobacco industry. "Minnesota wants a bigger damage award than it would be entitled to under the formula used by the other states, more immediate and complete disclosure of internal industry documents and an across the board ban on marketing to children."⁴⁴ The tobacco industry finally lost the fight because of bad luck. "After one judge on a three-judge panel died and another became ill, the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ordered reargument, raising the prospect that the appeal now might be heard before an entirely new panel. The order casts a cloud [metaphor] over one of the few bright spots for cigarette makers in recent months."⁴⁵ Reports painted a bleak picture of huge compensation claims in future lawsuits against the tobacco industry "...as likely to raise the price tag for future settlements of some three dozen similar state suits and toughen the terms of national tobacco legislation now being considered by Congress."⁴⁶

Conclusion and Discussion

Comparative analysis of the 1964 Surgeon General report between the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal revealed that both newspapers defined the situation in the same manner -- smoking was associated with cancer and other illness and smokers should assume the responsibility of smoking. Both newspapers shared the frame of the "ominous shadow of smoking," with the themes of death and health scare. Both newspapers quoted the Surgeon General's report on the deadly illness related to smoking and mentioned the public health scare. With regard to the theme of health

scare, the New York Times focused on the panic reaction of smokers and different societal groups either opposing or approving the Surgeon General's report. Congress was reported to veto the bill calling for scrapping the subsidies to the tobacco industry; physicians and the American Newspaper Publishers Association were depicted as criticizing the Johnson Administration for infringing the press freedom if the FTC regulated tobacco advertising. Representatives of tobacco growing states voiced concern of possibly economic hardship in regulating tobacco industry. To achieve balanced reporting, the New York Times quoted extensively from the Surgeon General's report, citing the death risk of smoking. Smokers and public health organizations voiced support of health education and regulation of tobacco advertising. Thus, the New York Times presented a two-sided view of the 1964 Surgeon General's report.

The Wall Street Journal took a slightly different angle in reporting the health scare. Cigarette manufacturers, as well as smokers were reported to be nervous over the Surgeon General's report. The tobacco industry was reported as worrying over future lawsuits triggered by the findings of the Surgeon General's report. The Wall Street Journal downplayed the impact of the Surgeon General's report, saying that the scare would end soon. Reports cited evidence that cigar sale rose in spite of the Surgeon General's report. Tobacco manufacturers were optimistic about the future. The tobacco industry overcame a similar crisis in 1953 [when a French physician found the link

between smoking and cancer]. The tobacco industry was seen as teaching smokers how to overcome the health scare. Advertisement targeted at both men and women to calm their fears about smoking.

Both the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal framed the 1964 issue as a battle. The New York Times interpreted the battle in economic terms --- a battle entwined with vital economic interest, while the Wall Street Journal framed the battle in terms of doubting the government. Reports challenged not only the legitimacy and authority of the FTC in regulating tobacco advertising, but also the scientific trustworthiness of the Surgeon General's report. In this way, reports undermined the validity of the Surgeon General's report and implicated the government as assigning an appropriate body to handle the tobacco issue.

Do the media reports of respective newspaper change over time? Comparing the New York Times coverage of the 1964 Surgeon General report and 1998 Minnesota trial shows coverage as less supportive of the tobacco industry as time went by. The 1964 issue reports offered a two-sided view, quoting opinions from those supporting and opposing the tobacco industry. On the other hand, in the 1998 Minnesota trial, news reports had frames of conspiracy and deception. Reports portrayed the tobacco industry in a negative manner. "Minnesota says tobacco papers prove deception by the industry."⁴⁷ "Philip Morris censored data."⁴⁸ "Despite its [tobacco industry] aggressive

rhetoric, [it] does not think it can win."⁴⁹ "To stop the industry's pernicious marketing activities."⁵⁰

On the other hand, the Wall Street Journal portrayed the tobacco industry in a more positive manner in the 1998 Minnesota trial. It offered the plain view of the way the tobacco industry was accused of deception and conspiracy. "An ex-official of Philip Morris invokes Fifth Amendment Rights [against self-incrimination]."⁵¹ "Lonely Lawyers for Liggett Feel Minnesota Chill."⁵² "Philip Morris Memo Outlines Strategy to Study how Nicotine Affects the Brain."⁵³ Lawyers, instead of tobacco companies, were blamed for withholding adverse scientific results, "Tobacco papers show lawyers' control of data."⁵⁴ Thus, the Wall Street Journal was more supportive of the tobacco industry over time than was the New York Times.

What about the Wall Street Journal coverage of the 1964 Surgeon General's report? The Wall Street Journal was supportive of the tobacco industry in covering the 1964 Surgeon General's report and the 1998 Minnesota trial. In 1964, the newspaper downplayed the effects of a health scare by portraying the tobacco industry as overcoming the possible economic hardship as it had in 1953. Reports cited evidence of an increase in cigar sale despite the release of the Surgeon General's report. The tobacco industry was portrayed as trying to reduce people's fears of inhaling tobacco. Again in 1998, the Wall Street Journal was supportive of the tobacco industry by

framing tobacco industry's defeat in terms of lack of fortune rather than immoral business practice. All in all, the Wall Street Journal portrayed the tobacco industry in a positive manner over time.

Reference

Allen, B., O., Loughlin, P., Jasperson, A., and Sullivan, J. L. (1994). The Media and the Gulf

War: Framing, Priming and the Spiral of Silence. *Polity*, 2, 255-284.

Blum-Kulka, S. and Liebes, T. (1993). Frame Ambiguities: Intifada and Narrativization of the

Experience by Israeli Soldiers. In A. A. Cohen and G. Wolfsfeld (Eds.), *Framing the Intifada:*

People and Media, New Jersey: Albex Press.

Burgess, J. (1996). Framing Science: The Making of a BBC Documentary. *The Sociological*

Review, 34, 727-729.

Burkett, D. W. (1973). *Writing Science News for the Mass Media*, Texas: Gulf Publishing

Company.

Burkett, D. W. (1986). *News Reporting: Science, Medicine, and High Technology*, Texas: The

Iowa State University Press.

Carey, J. W. (1989). *Communication As Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. New York:

Routledge.

Cohen et. al. (1993). Television News and the Intifada: A Comparative Study of Social Conflict.

In A. A. Cohen and G. Wolfsfeld (Eds.), *Framing the Intifada: People and Media*, New

Jersey: Albex.

Collins, C. A. & Clark, J. E. (1992). A Structural Narrative Analysis of Nightline's 'This Week in the Holy Land.

Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 9, 25-43.

Domke, D. (December, 1997). Journalists, Framing, and Discourse about Race Relations.

Journalism & Mass Communication Monographs, 164.

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing U.S. coverage of International News: Contrasts in Narratives of the KAL and Iran Air Incidents. *Journal of Communication*, 41, 6-41.

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58.

Gamson, W. A. (1989). News as Framing. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 33(2), 157-161.

Gamson, W. A. (1981). The Political Culture of Arab-Israeli Conflict. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 5(2), 79-93.

Gamson, W. A. (1988). Political Discourse and Collective Action. *International Social Movement Research*, 1, 219-244.

Gamson, W. A. & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: a Constructionist Approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95(1), 1-37.

Gamson, W. A., Croteau, D., Hoynes, W. & Sasson, T. (1992). Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality. *Annual Reviews Sociology*, 18, 373-393.

Gitlin, T. (1980). *The Whole World is Watching*. Berkeley, CA: University of California.

Hall, S. (1999). *Representation and the Media*. Northampton, Media Education Foundation.

Hall, S. (1982). The Rediscovery of ideology: return of the repressed in media studies. In J. Curran, M. Gurevitch & J. Wollacott (Eds.), *Culture, Society and the Media*. London: Methuen Press.

Iyengar, S. and Simon A. (1993). News coverage of the Gulf War Crisis and Public Opinion, *Communication Research*, 20(3), 365-383.

Jensen, K. B. & Jankowski, N.W. (1995). *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies For Mass Communication Research*. New York: Routledge Press.

Lenart, S. & Targ, H. (1991). Framing the Enemy: New York Times coverage of Cuba in the 1980s. *Peace & Change*, 17(3), 1-16.

Liebes, T. (1992). Our War/their War: Comparing the Intifadeh and the Gulf War on U.S. and Israeli Television, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 9, 44-45.

Kanjirathinkal, M. & Hickey, J. (1992). Media Framing and Myth: the Media's Portrayal of the Gulf War. *Critical Sociology*, 19(1), 103-112.

Roeh, I. & Nir, R. (1993). Reporting the Intifada in the Israeli Press: How Mainstream Ideology Overrides Quality and Melodrama. In A.A. Cohen & G. Wolfsfeld. (eds), *Framing the Intifada: People and Media*, New Jersey: Albex Press.

Shoemaker, P. J. & Reese, S. D. (1996). *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content*. New York: Longman Publishers USA.

Sigal, L.V. (1973). *Reporters and Officials*. Lexington, Mass., Toronto: D.C. Heath.

Vanderford, M. L. & Smith, D. H. (1996). *The Silicone Breast Implant Story: Communication and Uncertainty*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Copyright of Conference Papers -- International Communication Association is the property of International Communication Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.