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Changes in the news representation of smokers and tobacco-related media advocacy from 1995 to 2005 in Australia

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ABSTRACT

Background: This study aims to show how smokers were represented in smoking-related news articles, editorials, letters and columns in a major Australian newspaper over an 11-year period from January 1995 to December 2005.

Methods: Qualitative content analysis was conducted on a sample of 618 articles to identify 21 representational categories (RCs) of the smoker. Articles were also examined for statements that lent organisational support to either tobacco control or the promotion of tobacco.

Results: The construction of the smoker as a “regulated citizen” due to being subjected to tobacco policy was the most prevalent RC, occurring in 43.4% of articles. Of the 13 most prevalent RCs, eight were constructions of the smoker that lent support to tobacco control outcomes, two were supportive of the promotion of tobacco, and three could be used by both parties. 30.6% of articles contained at least one statement from a tobacco control advocacy source, compared with only 13.6% of articles having a statement towards the promotion of tobacco.

Conclusion: These results indicate that constructions of the smoker that support tobacco control have dominated smoking-related discourse in this Australian newspaper and that representations favouring a tobacco industry viewpoint appeared less often. However, the pro-tobacco representations of smokers in reports relating to legal issues highlight an area of media discourse in which tobacco control advocates should remain vigilant.

The media can influence public perceptions of health issues,^{1,2} health-related behaviour^{3,4} and governmental responses to health issues.^{5,6} Although tobacco is a newsworthy subject,⁷⁻⁹ smoking-related news coverage is understudied. Further investigation of smoking-related media discourse is required,¹⁰ so that tobacco control media advocacy efforts can garner maximum political and public support.¹¹ A range of tobacco-related news media analyses have contributed to this goal.^{8,9,12-14} Descriptive news analyses have found policy issues⁹ and secondhand smoke in particular to be the most prominent tobacco issue in the news,^{7,8,15} and have also established that overall coverage as well as “opinionated” coverage is largely favourable to tobacco control. In addition, studies have linked news coverage to either behavioural^{14,16} or policy outcomes.^{17,18}

The analysis of news coverage has been informed by the concept of the “news frame”—the result of the journalistic selection process that decides what elements of a story receive focus, and what elements are ignored.¹⁹ News frames make “one

basic interpretation more readily discernible, comprehensible, and memorable than others” (Entman, p. 7)²⁰ and shape how events or issues are publicly defined and discussed.²¹ Competing stakeholders use media advocacy to construct and advance news frames that support their ownership of or affinity with the way a problem is constructed in the media. Tobacco control agencies and the tobacco industry are competing stakeholders in relation to media portrayals of tobacco, smoking and smokers.

The majority of news studies on tobacco have simply set out to describe either the general news environment on the topic or coverage of one specific issue. To date, no studies have focused on portrayals of smokers. A study of US news articles about passive smoking noted the changing profile of smokers from 1981 to 1994—from rarely appearing in news articles in the early 1980s to being associated with deviance by the 1990s.²² This paper adds to news studies on tobacco and limited research on the depiction of smokers, by showing changes in how “the smoker” has been constructed in a sample of smoking-related newspaper articles from a major Australian newspaper from 1995 to 2005.

This 11-year period was a time of changing social attitudes towards smoking in Australia.²³ An overview of the tobacco-related events that occurred during 1995–2005 in Australia, and specifically within the state of Victoria, where this study was conducted, gives a sense of the social context accompanying the generation of smoking-related newspaper articles that contained representations of “the smoker”. Consistent with changes in the broader Australian population, between 1995 and 2005, there was a decrease in the prevalence of regular smokers in the state of Victoria, from 25.1% in 1995²⁴ to 18.5% in 2005,²⁵ and a decrease in adolescent smoking from 19% in 1999 to 9% in 2005.²⁶ Changes in the way tobacco was taxed nationally resulted in higher cigarette prices from 1999, with increases after this time being in line with inflation.²⁷ Tobacco control campaigns over this period featured television and radio advertisements that emphasised the serious health effects of smoking and directed smokers to sources of help to quit.^{28,29} The Victorian Tobacco Act was amended in 2000 and 2001 to ban tobacco advertising at point-of-sale, and there was ongoing development of smoke-free legislation: in 2001, smoke-free dining and shopping centre laws were implemented; smoke-free gambling was in place by 2002; and in 2003, the Victorian government announced a

Research report

plan to make all workplaces, including bars, smoke-free in mid-2007.³⁰ There were also two smoking-related legal cases that generated considerable media attention during this period.^{14 31}

This paper aims to show the overall patterns of change over time in the kinds of representation of “the smoker” that have been in circulation in smoking-related newspaper articles from a major Australian newspaper from 1995 to 2005. This paper also examines the extent of media advocacy undertaken in support of tobacco control and public relations undertaken in support of tobacco promotion. Insights into the role that media advocacy plays in the representation of smokers may assist a strategic response by those engaged in tobacco control media advocacy.

METHODS

The news coverage analysed was limited to articles from *The Age* newspaper, one of two major daily newspapers—and the nation’s leading newspaper in terms of journalistic awards—in Melbourne, capital city of the state of Victoria, Australia, from 1 January 1995 to 31 December 2005. *The Age* and the other major daily newspaper in Melbourne present tobacco-related news coverage in a comparable fashion: reporting on similar tobacco control topics, and presenting a parallel range of positions in relation to tobacco control objectives and progress in both the hard news and opinionated coverage (Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, unpublished data). Circulation figures in 2005³² show that *The Age* reached 10.8% of the Victorian population during the week, and 16.5% on Saturdays. For the years 2001–2005, articles were selected from those collected as part of a larger project monitoring news coverage of tobacco issues in Australia and the US.^{7 33 34} The articles in this Australian newspaper archive were located by a media monitoring company using the following search terms: smoke, smoker, smoking, tobacco, cigarette, cigar, quit, quitting, quitline, nicotine, nicotine replacement therapy and Zyban (a prescription medication designed to help smokers quit more easily). For the years 1995–2000, which predated the larger project, articles were sourced from *The Age* newspaper CD-ROM archives by replicating the search terms used by the media monitoring company.

From 1995 to 2005, 1236 articles were sourced—including news articles, editorials, letters and columns—that met the inclusion criteria of being at least seven lines long and containing at least 50% of paragraphs relating to tobacco issues. In order to make the coding process more manageable, a random sample of 50% of the articles published in each year of the sample was selected, reducing the total number of articles to 618.

A qualitative content analysis of the 618 articles was undertaken, mindful of one of the main tenets of critical discourse analysis: that texts be interpreted in relation to their sociocultural context.^{35 36} In order to develop a list of coding categories that described the variety of ways in which smokers were represented in the sample, two researchers engaged in an iterative process of reading and coding clusters of articles, comparing interpretations and refining the coding framework.

Additional coding rules were developed during the process to improve consistent application of the framework: a passage of text was required to be at least two sentences long to qualify as a possible coding category, and a coding category was to be coded once only per article. Also, there was no limit to the number of different coding categories—which were entitled “representational categories” (RCs) of the smoker—that could be identified in each article. The final coding framework,

consisting of 21 RCs, was applied by two researchers to a sample of 30 articles with an 89% rate of coding concordance.

Coding rules were also developed to capture the media advocacy undertaken to further tobacco control and the public relations undertaken in support of tobacco promotion interests. Each article was examined for organisations that have a vested interest in the promotion or control of tobacco: by a spokesperson being quoted or by the views of a named organisation being represented in a general way (see online appendix for a list of organisations). Each article was coded for the presence or absence of one or more tobacco control media advocacy statements and tobacco promotion public relations statements.

A series of bivariate logistic regression analyses were used to examine changes in the prevalence of RCs in the 618 sampled articles across the years. The presence or absence of each specific RC was the dependent variable, with year the linear predictor variable. A similar set of analyses examined changes across years in the prevalence of statements from tobacco control and tobacco promotion sources. Analysis of RCs by news articles and opinion articles over time were not conducted, as there were insufficient cell sizes. As it was possible for articles to include one, both or neither of the statements, we used a series of two-way chi-square analyses. The first set was conducted on each RC to test for the presence (or absence) of tobacco control advocacy statements, the second set to test for the presence (or absence) of tobacco promotion public relations statements and, finally, another set to test for whether neither of these statements appeared within each RC.

RESULTS

There were 618 articles in total, an average of 56 per year (minimum 37, maximum 76). Overall, 69.9% were hard news articles and 30.1% were opinion articles such as letters, columns and editorials, and this percentage did not vary significantly over time. Of the total sample of articles, 19.3% appeared in the early general news section (first four pages) of the newspaper, with a trend towards a linear increase over time (year) (Linear odds ratio (OR) 1.07, 95% confidence interval (CI) 1.00 to 1.14).

Distribution of representational categories

Overall, 24.8% of the 618 articles contained at least one RC, 31.6% contained two, 20.6% contained three, 11.3% contained four, and 11.9% contained five or more RCs. Of the 21 RCs initially identified, the 13 most prevalent RCs, which each occurred in more than 50 of the 618 articles, are displayed in table 1. By far the most common RC, occurring in 43.4% of articles, was “smoker as regulated citizen”, whereby smokers were portrayed as being subject to or influenced by some kind of tobacco policy. Eight of the 13 most prevalent RCs reflected broader tobacco control outcomes of decreasing smoking, restricting where smoking can occur and reducing its social acceptability. Aside from “smoker as regulated citizen”, these included “smoker at risk” (26.2%), “smoker as selfish polluter” (19.7%), “smoker as supported potential quitter” (18.8%), “smoker as tobacco industry pawn” (17.0%), “smoker as quitter” (13.8%), “smoker as drain on the economy” (10.0%) and “smoker as nicotine addict” (9.2%).

Two of the 13 most prevalent RCs of the smoker are readily utilised in support of a pro-tobacco agenda: “smoker as free agent” (20.2%) and “beneficiary of the positive functions of smoking” (8.6%). There were three RCs that were harnessed by both tobacco control and tobacco industry sources: “smoker as

Table 1 Description and prevalence of representational categories of the smoker in a sample of 618 smoking-related articles from *The Age* newspaper in Melbourne, Australia, from 1995 to 2005

Representational category (RC) title	RC prevalence n = 618	RC description	RC indicative example*
Smoker as regulated citizen	n = 268 43.4%	Smokers who are affected by smoking regulations	Every day you see them: a congregation outside office buildings, grabbing five minutes to draw back a few, smoke-filled breaths before they return to their desks. Outdoor smoke breaks are the phenomenon of the 1990s. <i>The Age</i> , 02.01.99, page 1 (news article)
Smoker at risk	n = 162 26.2%	Smokers are more at risk of disease and death than non-smokers	The study found smokers were twice as likely to suffer complications after surgery, compared with non-smokers. Also, smokers were more than five times more likely to contract wound infections requiring more treatment or more time in hospital. 27.08.01, page 5 (news article)
Smoker as free agent	n = 125 20.2%	Smokers who experience an unregulated smoking environment	Smoke-free pubs, thankfully, are still a rarity in Victoria, and long may they remain so. With the collapse of organised religion, the notion of the pub-as-sanctuary has gained a special place in the hearts of smokers. People smoke in pubs. That's what pubs are for. To walk into a pub and complain about the smoking is about as logical as walking into Hades and complaining about the heat. <i>The Age</i> , 31.05.98, page 6 (column)
Smoker as selfish polluter	n = 122 19.7%	Smokers produce dangerous environmental tobacco smoke, which can cause negative health effects in those exposed to it	Musician Joe Camilleri, a non-smoker, knows the drawbacks of performing in smoky pubs and bars only too well, having done it for the past 30-odd years. "I did a show a couple of weeks ago and I felt like I was on fire", Camilleri says. "The smoke was so thick you could cut it with a knife, and my body didn't relate to it very well for the first 20 minutes. You start to feel instantly claustrophobic". <i>The Age</i> , 26.05.00, page 14 (news article)
Smoker as statistic	n = 118 19.1%	The individual habits of smokers and increases in smoking rates at a population level	A study by the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria's Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer has found that, in 1996, smoking among 12- to 15-year-old boys and 16- and 17-year-old girls increased compared with 1993. It estimated that, in 1996, there were 131 000 school-aged boys smoking and 145 000 girls. 11.06.99, page 6 (news article)
Smoker as supported potential quitter	n = 116 18.8%	Smokers can be supported to quit by the government, nicotine replacement therapies, health organisations, family and friends	The Quit program yesterday used New Year's Day to launch a campaign to make more Victorian homes smoke-free. The Trash Your Ashtray campaign encouraged smokers to give up their ashtrays, which were then crushed by a compacter outside the General Post Office. The shards were swept up for use in a sculpture. <i>The Age</i> , 02.01.97, page 3 (news article)
Smoker as tobacco industry pawn	n = 105 17.0%	The tobacco industry has deceived smokers by advertising smoking as attractive and sophisticated in full knowledge of its addictive and lethal properties	The 41-year-old from Blaxland started smoking when she was 10, seduced by advertising and some dubious homespun wisdom. "The Alpine lady was gorgeous, the Marlboro man was gorgeous. It was all so country, free, beautiful, fresh", she said yesterday. <i>The Age</i> , 22.12.03, page 4 (news article)
Smoker as quitter	n = 85 13.8%	Individual smokers who are intending to quit, attempting to quit or who have quit	I've given up smoking. Lots of times. The most recent occasion was Monday, week before last. The time before that, I used nicotine chewing gum and managed six weeks. This time I used semi-dried fruit, cheese biscuits, 16 bite-sized Milky Ways, a packet of nicotine-free, tobacco-free Ginseng herbal cigarettes and sheer, steely willpower. <i>The Age</i> , 31.05.98, page 6 (column)
Smoker as tobacco industry litigant	n = 79 12.8%	The smoker who is engaging the tobacco industry in lawsuits to get compensation for tobacco-related illness	Jazz lover Margaret Peterson's smouldering 40-year affair with cigarettes has taken her breath away. Now, Ms Peterson wants to see the companies behind Australia's deadliest habit brought to account in court. "I would hate to see anybody else go through what I did this last couple of years because, to be perfectly frank, I didn't want to live a lot of the time", she said. Ms Peterson is one of more than a thousand Australians suing the tobacco giants Philip Morris, Rothmans and WD & HO Wills for damages in a historic class action. <i>The Age</i> , 17.05.99, page 4 (news article)
Smoker as vulnerable youth	n = 76 12.3%	Youth need to be protected and educated so they do not take up smoking as a result of the influence of external influences—such as peer group pressure	For Clinton, protecting youth from the ravages of nicotine fits perfectly with his attempt to reshape himself as a president protecting family values ... Now he wants America's teenagers to grow up smoke-free, protected from the seductive advances of Joe Camel. <i>The Age</i> , 30.08.96, page 9 (column)
Smoker as drain on the economy	n = 62 10.0%	Smokers require smoke breaks and health resources resulting from smoking-related disease, which is costly to the government, workplaces and the taxpayer	Employees who regularly duck out for cigarette breaks are causing resentment among non-smoking colleagues, according to a survey. An Internet poll of 6000 people by recruitment agency TMP Worldwide found that 71 per cent believed that those taking regular smoke breaks were abusing company time. <i>The Age</i> , 05.03.02, page 7 (news article)
Smoker as nicotine addict	n = 57 9.2%	Smokers are dependent on smoking because they are addicted to nicotine. As a result of nicotine addiction, it is hard to quit. Smokers should not be condemned because of the challenges they face in breaking the addiction	Sean Penn unhooks the tubes connecting his nostrils to an oxygen tank, slumps down on the toilet seat and lights a cigarette. Sucking hard, he exhales with a cough and fans the air with his hand to hide the smoky evidence. Penn's character in the movie <i>21 Grams</i> is about to die from heart failure, but he's still got to have a gasper. <i>The Age</i> , 09.02.04, page 2 (column)
Smoker as beneficiary of the positive functions of smoking	n = 53 8.6%	Smoking can provide functions that are valued by the smoker, such as assisting with stress management, and allows access to positive images associated with smoking—such as glamour and rebellion	For better or worse, smoking is seen as an important social tool. Anyone who has observed a group of unacquainted first-year university students on a break will know exactly what I mean. As boring as it might sound, smoking is an effective ice-breaker in today's society. <i>The Age</i> , 03.06.98, page 14 (letter)

*The indicative example is followed by the publication date of the newspaper the article appeared in and specification of the article type: news article, editorial, column or letter.

statistic" (19.1%) (depending on the presentation of information about increasing rates of people smoking); "smoker as tobacco industry litigant" (12.8%) (as the litigating smoker can

be portrayed as either justified or not for attempting to sue tobacco companies for smoking-related illness); and "smoker as vulnerable youth" (12.3%) (depending on whether

Research report

the protection offered to youth against smoking is ventured as part of a comprehensive tobacco control solution or, according to the tobacco industry, simply an education problem that needs to be addressed).

In general, there were no significant changes over time in the frequency of occurrence of most of the RCs. However, changes in frequency were found in five RCs. There were two RCs that increased significantly in prevalence between 1995 and 2005: "smoker as tobacco industry pawn" increased from 3.8% in 1995 to 27.5% in 2005 (linear OR 1.14, 95% CI 1.06 to 1.23); and "smoker as tobacco industry litigant" increased from 5.7% in 1995 to 17.5% in 2005 (linear OR 1.14, 95% CI 1.05 to 1.24). In contrast, "smoker as quitter" (22.6% in 1995 to 12.5% in 2005; linear OR 0.92, 95% CI 0.85 to 0.99) and "smoker as drain on the economy" (high of 21.6% in 1997 to low of 2.5% in 2004; linear OR 0.90, 95% CI 0.82 to 0.99) decreased significantly over time. "Smoker as vulnerable youth" showed the most significant decline over the time period examined, with 24.5% in 1995 to 2.5% in 2005 (linear OR 0.82, 95% CI 0.75 to 0.90).

Statements from tobacco control and tobacco promotion sources

Using the coding parameters outlined previously, each article was coded for the presence of statements from tobacco control and tobacco promotion advocates. Overall, 30.6% of articles contained a statement from a tobacco control source, and 13.6% contained a statement from a tobacco promotion source. In addition, 62.9% of articles saw neither source quoted. Figure 1 indicates that the prevalence of tobacco control advocacy statements showed a trend for a linear decline over time from 41.5% in 1995 to 15.0% in 2004 (37.5% in 2005) (linear OR 0.94, 95% CI 0.89 to 1.00). However, there was a more marked decrease in tobacco promotion public relations statements over time with a significant decrease from 22.6% in 1995 to 7.5% in 2005 (linear OR 0.89, 95% CI 0.82 to 0.96).

The relationship between representational categories and statements from tobacco control or tobacco promotion sources

Table 2 shows the extent to which statements from tobacco control or tobacco promotion sources appeared in articles with

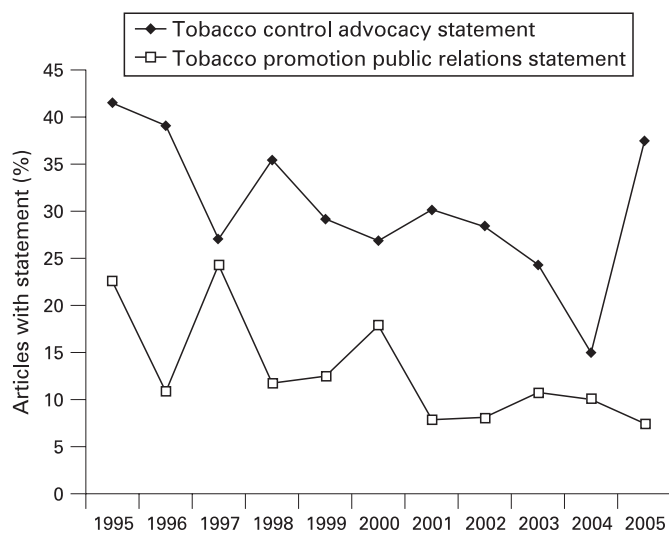


Figure 1 Percentage of articles from a sample of 618 smoking-related articles from *The Age* newspaper in Melbourne, Australia, from 1995 to 2005, that contain tobacco control advocacy statements or tobacco promotion public relations statements.

each RC. Articles with statements from tobacco control sources were more likely to occur in RCs featuring "smoker as statistic" ($p < 0.01$). This reflects the journalistic convention that, when research results are released on smoking trends, the data are usually accompanied by a tobacco control statement urging further tobacco control action. Tobacco control statements were also more likely in articles featuring the "smoker as supported potential quitter" ($p < 0.001$) because tobacco control sources were invariably those providing the support. In contrast, tobacco promotion public relations statements were more likely to feature in articles with the following RCs: "smoker as drain on the economy" ($p < 0.01$), "smoker as tobacco industry litigant" ($p < 0.01$) and "smoker as tobacco industry pawn" ($p < 0.001$). This shows the kinds of smoker representations that tobacco companies and pro-tobacco organisations are emphasising or responding to, or are being sought for comment on by journalists.

There was an over-representation of statements in articles where the "smoker as vulnerable youth" occurred (tobacco control statements: $p < 0.05$; tobacco promotion statements: $p < 0.05$). Compared with articles featuring other RCs, articles with the "smoker as the beneficiary of the positive functions of smoking" RC were more likely *not* to contain a tobacco promotion public relations statement ($p < 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

This paper adds to existing news studies on tobacco, and limited information about how smokers are depicted in the news media, by showing the overall patterns of change in how smokers were represented in a major Australian newspaper over an 11-year period. The analyses indicate that, although the prevalence of RCs do fluctuate over time due to specific events

Table 2 Articles with tobacco control advocacy statements and tobacco promotion public relations statements in a sample of 618 smoking-related articles from *The Age* newspaper, Melbourne, Australia, from 1995 to 2005, coded for representational categories of the smoker

Representational category	Articles with tobacco control advocacy statements n (%)	Articles with tobacco promotion public relations statements n (%)	Articles with no advocacy statement n (%)
Total sample n = 618	189 (30.6)	84 (13.6)	389 (62.9)
Smoker as regulated citizen	92 (34.3)	38 (14.2)	160 (59.7)
Smoker at risk	55 (34.0)	24 (14.8)	97 (59.9)
Smoker as free agent	41 (32.8)	20 (16.0)	78 (62.4)
Smoker as selfish polluter	38 (31.1)	10 (8.2)	82 (67.2)
Smoker as statistic	50** (42.4)	13 (11.0)	62 (52.5)
Smoker as supported potential quitter	55*** (47.4)	10 (8.6)	57 (49.1)
Smoker as tobacco industry pawn	37 (35.2)	27*** (25.7)	52 (49.5)
Smoker as quitter	26 (30.6)	11 (12.9)	56 (65.9)
Smoker as tobacco industry litigant	18 (22.8)	20** (25.3)	48 (60.8)
Smoker as vulnerable youth	31* (40.8)	16* (21.1)	34 (44.7)
Smoker as drain on the economy	18 (29.0)	17** (27.4)	32 (51.6)
Smoker as nicotine addict	12 (21.1)	10 (17.5)	39 (68.4)
Smoker as beneficiary of the positive functions of smoking	12 (22.6)	4 (7.5)	41* (77.4)

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ over-representation of statement.

in different years, there were overall linear changes in the prevalence of some RCs, which we have identified.

Representations of the smoker that support tobacco control dominated smoking-related articles in *The Age* newspaper during 1995–2005. The context to this coverage was the tobacco control activity that occurred in Victoria over the 11 years, which drove the kinds of tobacco-related issues that both created and attracted media attention. The depictions of the smoker that supported tobacco control were enhanced by the presence of one or more tobacco control advocacy statements occurring in one in three articles in the sample—statements that highlighted and promoted tobacco control interpretations of events. That these statements declined over time is perhaps related to advocacy efforts being reduced once the legislative and policy gains that marked the period were won. There was increased public acceptance of the tobacco control policies that were implemented during this time, including increased support for smoking bans³⁷ and acceptance of anti-smoking advertising campaigns, and thus less need to cite tobacco control voices in particular.^{38 39}

In contrast, our finding that tobacco promotion public relations statements were less prevalent (occurring in 13.6% of articles) than tobacco control advocacy statements, and became less frequent over time, suggests that the tobacco industry has either reduced its activity in relation to shaping smoking-related discourses in Australian newspapers or is not being sought for comment with as much frequency by journalists. This trend may also be indicative of a broader shift in how tobacco companies engage with the media. In response to the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement in the United States, at least one major tobacco company officially shifted its policy so that its website became a primary means of communicating company policy.⁴⁰ This de-emphasising of the news media as a communication conduit may have contributed to the downward trend reported here. Another possible reflection of the tobacco industry's position in relation to the news media is our finding that, compared with articles featuring other RCs, articles with the “smoker as the beneficiary of the positive functions of smoking” RC were more likely *not* to contain a tobacco promotion public relations statement. This indicates that the tobacco industry is not associated with this depiction of the smoker in the news media, in contrast to their massive investment in advertising and promotion of the positive functions of smoking in marketing efforts.⁴¹

Research has confirmed that the public continue to view the tobacco industry as untrustworthy and dishonest.^{42 43} One strategy used by the tobacco industry to circumvent a poor public profile has been the cultivation of “front groups” in the media to promote their agenda. In this study, two organisations that made tobacco promotion public relations statements have proven links to the tobacco industry: The Tobacco Institute⁴⁴ and The Australian Hotels' Association.^{5 45} The low prevalence of tobacco promotion public relations statements found in this sample of newspaper articles suggests that the strategy of using front groups has not been particularly utilised in the Australian media during the past decade. Front groups may instead be engaged in other roles, such as lobbying legislators for pro-tobacco policy changes.

However, the tobacco industry has been asked to comment on, or chosen to engage with, media reports about tobacco litigation, seen in the large proportion of tobacco promotion public relations statements in articles with RCs connected to legal proceedings: “smoker as drain on the economy”, “smoker as tobacco industry litigant” and “smoker as tobacco industry

pawn”. This indication that the tobacco industry can take up a particular position in relation to legal proceedings is also reflected by Milberger and colleagues,⁴⁶ who have shown that, during lawsuits, tobacco company representatives are willing to contradict the admission made in other contexts that smoking causes cancer.

A previous specific examination of the news coverage of a tobacco legal case in the Australian news media found that the frame most frequently used in relation to the coverage was that smokers engage their free will in smoking and, as a consequence, are responsible for any resulting smoking-related disease.³¹ This construction of the smoker was captured in the present study by the “smoker as informed risk taker” RC. However, in this analysis, the “smoker as informed risk taker” RC was infrequent, showing that there is more scope in articles specifically about tobacco legal cases for discourses highlighting personal responsibility. To counteract this possibility, tobacco control media advocates should continue to promote the notion of the “smoker as tobacco industry pawn”. This would also contribute to the observation made in other research that tobacco-related lawsuits offer tobacco control advocates scope to frame tobacco issues in a way that can garner new public support for tobacco control policies.^{14 31}

There are additional studies suggested by the findings of this analysis. The RCs of the smoker developed here could be used to examine the newspaper coverage accompanying specific tobacco-related events. This kind of analysis could resource targeted and timely tobacco control media advocacy strategies. It needs to be noted that the RCs in this study were developed from an Australian news context. Prior to applying the RCs to the news media of other countries, it would be necessary to ascertain whether different or additional RCs were required. Also, an examination of the views of the reporters who generate tobacco-related articles might illuminate the role that reporters' values play in the construction of smoking-related discourse in Australian newspapers. In addition, the ways in which readers engage in public discourse on smoking could be investigated by

What is already known on this subject

- ▶ Tobacco control agencies and the tobacco industry are competing stakeholders in relation to media portrayals of tobacco, smoking and smokers.
- ▶ As such, research into smoking-related media discourse can resource tobacco control media advocacy efforts.
- ▶ A limited number of tobacco-related news media analyses have been undertaken.

What this study adds

- ▶ This study shows how smokers are represented in smoking-related news articles in a major daily Australian newspaper over an 11-year period, 1995–2005.
- ▶ It examines the extent of media advocacy undertaken in support of tobacco control and the public relations undertaken in support of the tobacco industry.
- ▶ It concludes that, due to the way in which smokers are represented, and the level of tobacco control media advocacy, the smoking-related discourse in an Australian newspaper predominantly supported tobacco control objectives.

Research report

comparing the prevalence of RCs in letters and opinion/editorials with the hard news coverage written by journalists. A limitation of our study was that we were unable to show this comparison because of the small cell sizes associated with the opinionated coverage. Although selecting a systematic random sample of public health news coverage is an effective means of managing the coding process and can produce estimates that closely approximate complete coverage,⁴⁷ a smaller resulting sample limits the potential for more in-depth subgroup analyses.

In conclusion, this analysis has shown that, due to the level of tobacco control media advocacy, and the way in which smokers are represented, the smoking-related discourse in an Australian newspaper predominantly supported tobacco control objectives. However, tobacco control advocates should remain vigilant in monitoring discourses surrounding smoking-related legal issues in order to prevent pro-tobacco representations of the smoker from gaining traction.

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Organisations that issued tobacco control advocacy statements:

Action on Smoking and Health—Australia, Britain
 Advocacy Institute, United States
 American Cancer Society
 Anti-Cancer Council Victoria/The Cancer Council Victoria
 Arizona University, Respiratory Sciences Centre
 Asthma Australia
 Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre, Melbourne
 Australian Cancer Society/The Cancer Council Australia
 Australian Council on Smoking and Health
 Australian Health Policy Institute
 Australian Medical Association
 Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
 Cancer Council Australia, NSW
 Centre for Adolescent Health, Melbourne
 Chinese Smoking and Health Association
 Community and Public Sector Union Tasmania
 Concord Hospital Sydney
 Heart and Cancer Offensive Against Tobacco (Australian coalition 1998)
 Institute of Cancer Research, London
 Johns Hopkins Medical Centre
 Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union
 National Centre for Health Statistics, Maryland
 Quit (Victoria, NSW)
 Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals
 St George's Hospital, Sydney
 Sydney University Smoking Research Unit
 The Alfred Hospital, Melbourne
 The European Commission
 The National Heart Foundation (Australia)
 Tobacco Control Coalition (convenor Andrew Penman, 2000)
 Tobacco Problems Information Centre, Tokyo
 University of California, Department of Medicine
 University of Rochester Children's Hospital, New York
 University of Sydney, Public and Community Medicine Department
 University of Western Australia, Department of Public Health
 VicHealth (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation)
 VicHealth Centre for Tobacco Control
 World Health Organisation

Organisations that issued tobacco promotion public relations statements:

Australian Hotels Association
 Britain's Tobacco Manufacturers Association
 British American Tobacco Australasia
 Brown and Williamson Tobacco Corporation
 Cigar Society of Australia
 Crown Casino (Melbourne)
 Enlightened Tobacco Company
 Liggett
 Philip Morris
 Retail Confectionery and Mixed Business Association
 RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company
 Rothmans
 The Nightlife Association, New York
 Tobacco Co-operative of Victoria
 Tobacco Institute Australia
 Tobacco Retail Traders Association
 WD and HO Wills