

# President Clinton's Strategies for Communications in the 1998 Tobacco Debate

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## I INTRODUCTION

The modern political process in the United States is a war of debates conducted through the media. The media has become a battleground for political actors who want to appeal to the public and to promote their agendas, to compete for attention and approval, and to attack and to defend themselves. The press itself intervenes in political debates since it shifts the focus of attention, determines the relative priorities of the issues in a national debate, or suggests to its audience the very nature of the matter concerned. As the political parties are losing their ability to control policy debates, and because of the current, rapid delivery of news through an increasing number of media outlets, this modern "war" necessitates sophisticated skills in communications and strategies on the part of the political actors. The politicians are often assisted by political consultants and communications experts, or their campaigns are managed by a "war room," as was the case in the 1992 Clinton presidential campaign.<sup>1</sup>

Political communications strategies, their concepts and technologies, are typically applied in campaigns, but they have now become prevalent even in daily political performances, most notably in President Bill

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Clinton's "campaign-like" style of government for promoting challenging agendas.<sup>2</sup> This paper examines Clinton's strategic communications in the policy debate over tobacco from 1995, when he declared his agenda in the Tobacco War, until the defeat of the Senate bill in the 105th Congress on June 17, 1998. This bill, sponsored by Senator John McCain and strongly supported by Clinton, aimed to curb smoking among minors through regulating tobacco marketing and sales to them and by raising cigarette prices, but accepting some limits to the legal liability of the industry. Clinton is the first American president to take the initiative in comprehensive government plans to regulate Big Tobacco and to curb smoking by teenagers.

The tobacco industry has greatly influenced American politics both in and out of Washington as a big donor, a special interest group, and a key sponsor for and campaigner in the media.<sup>3</sup> Clinton's tobacco agenda, therefore, was definitely a political challenge, which required an energetic campaign with all the strategic and governing resources available to the administration to secure the support of the electorate, Congress, and even the Washington press corps. His strategic communications practices must have played a crucial role in this endeavor.

Political communications strategies generally cover the following operations: research (polling and forming data bases), the establishment and control of messages (setting or "framing" agendas, issue management, and personal images), media strategies (press relations, media selection and formats, "ad buys," and "narrowcast" media use, including the Internet and direct mailing), message creation and presentation (speech writing, camera performance, sound bites, and vocabularies), and organized feedback systems.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper we will examine the Clinton campaign, focusing on two phases of its strategic development: setting or framing the agenda and controlling the policy debate. We will show the skillful and advantageous, yet politically risky, aspects of his campaign-like governing strategies. These include voter-orientation or responsiveness, skillful spin control, and the "centrist" leadership strategy that Smith describes as a feature of his presidency, as we see in his contrivances to seek allies in the tobacco debate.<sup>5</sup> Since the tobacco debate has not been settled yet, in this paper we will present only a midstream evaluation of the successes and failures of Clinton's communications strategies and campaign in his war on tobacco. Nevertheless, we will show a clear profile of the strategic communication forms and practices of his presidency and

suggest what this will imply for modern presidential politics in the age of the modern media.

## II CLINTON'S STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS: AN OUTLINE

Before beginning a close examination of the Clinton tobacco campaign, we will give an outline of his communications strategies and the concepts and technologies used in his campaign-like government. The bottom line is that he has been a great political marketing practitioner and strategic communicator, in which we will see the *strategy* as well as the *philosophy* of his "responsive leadership."<sup>6</sup>

### DIRECT AND RESPONSIVE: A POLITICAL MARKETING PRACTITIONER

Communications strategies are part of the succinct strategic moves made and revised at each stage of a campaign process, with all the personal, political, and environmental factors taken into account. Newman, who gives a high assessment of Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign from a marketing perspective, describes this as political marketing and welcomes this consumer-oriented trend in politics since "the political process stands to be strengthened because candidates will need to direct more attention to the concerns of the voters to keep them satisfied."<sup>7</sup>

According to Newman, the marketing campaign for an election follows three major stages: market segmentation (to assess voter needs and to identify segments of voters), candidate positioning (to assess candidates and competition, to target segments, and to establish images), strategy formulation and implementation (campaign platform, promotion at the grass roots level, promotion through mass media, polling, and organization development and control). Marketing operations thus provide baselines for strategic campaign communications, and Clinton runs his administration today according to marketing concepts and technologies, particularly in conjunction with market (opinion) research. While Clinton's governing practices have often been criticized for their "poll-driven" or opportunistic nature, his market (voter) orientation has contributed to the direct and responsive nature of his communication and governing styles, and thus has helped him win the support of a majority for his agenda, or even create a large middle-class coalition of voters.

In formulating and controlling messages, for example, he was able to use marketing technologies to tailor his campaign platform to the

concerns of the electorate, as exemplified in his 1992 “Putting People First” package. He also successfully cast his personal and governmental image into that of “a candidate of the people” (1992) and then as “being presidential, but not like a politician” (1996). This was done so that voters, in an age of political cynicism and anger, could have some identification and sympathy with their leader.

Moreover, in areas of media strategies and in creating and presenting messages, concepts and techniques for marketing promotion were fully applied for effective voter appeal. For example, in his 1996 campaign, Clinton learned that people wanted to hear from him positive appeals presenting “the facts,” rather than negative attacks on the character of his opponents. He also selected effective media channels (e.g. local television stations) and formats (e.g. talk shows) to make sure that he reached the targeted markets or to sidestep the negative press. He tailored his “communicative” style to show that he was “in touch with the people” and could “talk with” them in impressive, pre-tested vocabulary designed to garner public sympathy.

His agendas and appeals were therefore geared to stay in touch with and to respond to the market. It should be noted here that this is his strategy as well as his de facto political philosophy, as demonstrated by his agendas and style. It constitutes an essential part of his responsive presidential leadership, which works particularly well in an age of public cynicism toward how government works and also toward Washington insiders who do not care about ordinary people.<sup>8</sup>

#### SPIN CONTROL AND “CENTRIST” LEADERSHIP: A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATOR

While marketing research has helped Clinton to read public opinion and has made his administration more voter-oriented, he also applies this expertise to pursue his own political objectives through skillfully controlling discussions of policy discussion in the media, that is by using spin control.<sup>9</sup> We can assume that he had to be skilled at it partly because he intended to try a politically challenging “third way,” independent of the old Democratic liberals as well as the Republican conservatives.

Spin control is an indispensable tactic in modern political debate where the perceptions of the people play a key role. For example, it would make a difference to control the popular perception of what a given “problem” is and how well it could be solved with the candidate’s or

speaker's proposed policy. Ball-Rokeach and others suggest that this "framing" of political debate offers the people a frame of reference with a set of values, which they can use to understand the nature of an agenda, in other words on what values the "problem" is defined and its resolutions are based, and thus to form their judgments on specific proposals.<sup>10</sup> Political actors therefore compete, whether in forming coalitions in a debate or in straightforward confrontation with each other, for the predominance of their own "frames" in popular perceptions. The press does this too, although it may not intend to mobilize the people but just to have its own "definitions" of the problems recognized by the audience.

President Clinton and his strategy team are skilled at spin control tactics and have mastered the "perception game" in Washington, as noted by Seiichi Kondo, former Japanese Government Spokesman in the United States.<sup>11</sup> In his spin control, Clinton often exploits the "fact" or the perception that he knows best what "real" public opinion is, or that he has understood the "real" voices of the people. Such a "poll master" perception of Clinton has a powerful political impact because political actors are eager to read precisely the shifting winds of public opinion for their agendas or survival. As these actors acknowledge that Clinton's electoral victories and his firm public approval are clear proof of his expertise in reading "real" public opinion, Clinton can strategically control the perceptions the actors may hold of public opinion. He can then take the initiative in debates and possibly even shape public opinion.<sup>12</sup>

Clinton does not simply move with the public, nor does he rely on spin control to change the direction of public opinion. Rather, he reads and uses public opinion as a strategic resource to win the "intelligence war" against his rivals and to gain national approval of his agenda. Clinton's former strategist Dick Morris describes this with the metaphor of "tacking" a yacht in a race, where Clinton asks pollsters "to help him determine which current he should try to harness to move him closer to his destination." Supposedly, Clinton required these strategies of information control as a part of his "triangular" or "centrist" leadership. Such triangular leadership, according to Morris, "creates a third position, not just in between the old positions of the two parties but above them as well." He recommended that Clinton "identify a new course that accommodates the needs the Republicans address [e.g. tax cuts] but does it in a way that is uniquely yours" and also step out ahead of the Democrats who talked "traditional class-warfare language."<sup>13</sup> In order to carve out

his own destination while striking a balance between the two parties and also to lead the nation and both parties to his agenda, Clinton was required to be skilled at information control through reading and using public opinion, or through showing the nation a new language and set of values, then controlling the frame of debate.

According to Smith, Clinton used the “politics of inclusion rather than division,” putting him and his agenda centermost in policy discussions and employing rhetoric and story telling to establish his electoral coalition. For example, he successfully packaged his 1992 campaign agenda in a clear story line, including the “jeremiad story” in which “the forgotten middle class” should be rescued and led by his vision of hope. He also strategically applied a new “centrist” approach to leadership, borrowing selectively from each of the four available leadership strategies: political bargaining (party or congressional support), public approval, going public (rhetorical power), and ideology. Smith indicated that Clinton employed a “going public” strategy only to win over opinion leaders and to undercut the opposition, and that it was a central theme in Clinton’s strategic leadership to help others, including political leaders, to learn to think as the president does.<sup>14</sup>

Clinton’s leadership requires an aptitude for handling numerous issues, from national health care reform to school uniforms for children, in a package with a set of values that a majority of the American people would share and which would influence even the members of Congress. It is crucial for him, while presiding over public debate, to bring other key players into his agenda frames, his vocabularies, and his resolutions, and to keep opponents silent. He also needs to make alliances in the political forum for common ground on which to promote his “third way.”

### III CHILDREN VERSUS BIG TOBACCO: STRATEGIES FOR FRAMING THE AGENDA

The “War on Tobacco” is a case where these strategies were put into full play, as “this might have been Clinton’s last major domestic initiative of his presidency.”<sup>15</sup> He put tobacco and smoking on the national policy agenda, after longstanding medical, legal, political, administrative, and social discussions of the issue,<sup>16</sup> by skillfully framing it to appeal to the whole nation as well as to Washington politicians and the press corps.

CHILDREN VERSUS BIG TOBACCO: THE "HE-CARES-  
ABOUT-PEOPLE-LIKE-ME" PACKAGE

At a press conference on August 10, 1995, President Clinton proposed for the first time in American presidential history a comprehensive and coordinated set of measures to significantly reduce tobacco usage by children and adolescents who are addicted to cigarettes and smokeless tobacco. Claiming it was a major public health hazard, he declared "I must do everything I can to bring this assault to a halt." He started a campaign with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), led by Commissioner David Kessler who had classified tobacco products as a drug delivery system for addictive nicotine, and proposed to bring these products within FDA jurisdiction. Then on August 23, 1996, Clinton announced the nation's first comprehensive program to prevent minors from smoking, or otherwise beginning a lifetime of nicotine addiction, through stronger efforts to reduce youth access to tobacco products and to limit the appeal of tobacco marketing, promotion, and advertising aimed at them.<sup>17</sup> He allowed the FDA to regulate the sales and distribution of tobacco products to young people and required the tobacco industry to fund a public education campaign to prevent youth from smoking. Here we can see how he double-framed the issue as a matter of public health and of protecting children. He put the issue into a new, more appealing package by integrating some of the popular, widely shared frames prevailing in the discussion of tobacco usage and how to control it, with the particular aim of demonstrating that the president can tune in to the public mood and address its demands.

Framing tobacco usage and its control as a matter of public health has been prevalent since the release in 1964 of the first report on smoking and health by the Surgeon General Luther L. Terry. As this perspective was diffused, medical reports and commentaries on the harmful impact of tobacco on health have shifted their focus from the lifestyles of individual smokers to the social hazards caused by smoking, specifically to the risks of underage smoking and the problems caused by secondhand smoke. The issue of public health has also been raised in light of the rising medical costs from tobacco-related diseases that governments have come to fear. In 1996, an estimated 47 million American adults smoked cigarettes, and regular tobacco use caused about one of every five deaths annually. This cost the nation more than \$100 billion for medical and other related expenditures and was called "the single most preventable

cause of death and disease in the nation.” Yet, as stated in 1997 by Donna Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services under Clinton, “today, nearly 3000 young people across our country will begin smoking regularly. Of these 3000 young people, 1000 will lose that gamble to the diseases caused by smoking.”<sup>18</sup>

The “War on Tobacco” acquired more momentum from the public outrage against the tobacco industry, which gave the Clinton administration a popular reason for regulating the industry and its promotional activities, especially those aimed at youth. Since the 1980s, and particularly in the last ten years, journalists, lawyers, and some congressmen such as Henry Waxman have devoted themselves to unveiling the concealed exploitative business practices and “conspiracies” of the tobacco industry.<sup>19</sup> These include marketing aimed at children, concealing information about the harmful impacts of their products on health which they had long known about, and committing perjury about how they control nicotine when making cigarettes. Based on this, Clinton justified his 1995 remark that government should intervene to stop the unjustifiable promotional activities of Big Tobacco aimed at children. He said “it is illegal for children to smoke cigarettes” and asked how it could “be legal for people to advertise to children to get them to smoke cigarettes” since “a lot of this advertising is designed to reach children, to get new customers for the tobacco companies as the old customers disappear.” He rationalized that “it cannot be a violation of freedom of speech [to ban advertisements that] try to get people to do something they can’t legally do.”<sup>20</sup>

Clinton framed his tobacco war in terms of public health and protecting children, as well as of justifiably regulating Big Business, and he put them both into one agenda for two major strategic reasons. One was to make his frame persuasive and acceptable to the American people since the majority continued to think that smoking was a personal choice, not the government’s business, and found no strong reason for federal involvement. Referring to children and unjustifiable business practices was designed to clear this hurdle.<sup>21</sup> The other reason was based on marketing strategies: he put this agenda into his policy package to target parents, as part of a broader vision for the 21st century which included other domestic initiatives such as health care, education, and fighting crime.

Reportedly, three key players prompted him to take up this issue: Dr. Kessler of the FDA, Vice President Albert Gore who lost a sister to lung cancer, and Dick Morris who advised Clinton to use it in his 1996 reelec-



tion campaign and to establish a record “which would rank him above third-tier Presidents.”<sup>22</sup> Morris persuaded him and the White House staff by referring to results of a poll which indicated that a majority of Americans, including people in the major tobacco states, supported curbs on teen smoking. He also suggested that it would appeal to Clinton’s targeted electorate, particularly the “swing,” wealthy baby boomers who tended to vote Republican but were inclined to be in the middle of the political spectrum, and specifically among them the parents who were later called “*Soccer Moms*.” Morris expected that they would care about “values” rather than their pocketbooks in the 1996 election. In other words, the tobacco war could be a “he-cares-about-people-like-me” issue, a symbol of his responsive presidency, in which he cared about the concerns of ordinary people for the quality of personal lives.<sup>23</sup>

During the 1996 presidential campaign, the tobacco war was a major theme. Gore appealed to anti-smoking feelings at the Democratic Convention, and the debate was even fueled by Bob Dole, the Republican candidate for president, who denied that nicotine was addictive. Clinton exploited this to foster an image that distinguished him as a “moral guard” for American families, fighting against Big Tobacco and Big Business, which he asserted the Republicans had long stood for in their own interests. In the presidential debate on October 6, for example, he assailed his opponent on the campaign finance issue:

Senator Dole had some pretty harsh comments about special interest money. But it wasn’t me who opposed what we tried to do to save the lives of children who are subject to tobacco and then went to the tobacco growers and bragged about standing up to the federal government when we tried to stop the advertising, marketing, and sales of tobacco to children. . . . That’s what Speaker [Newt] Gingrich and Senator Dole did, not me.<sup>24</sup>

This framing was so disruptive for the Republicans that, according to Nancy Gibbs of *Time*, in 1998 the Senate majority leader Trent Lott was induced, at least for the time being, to take the “least, worst option” of cutting a deal with Clinton. He did this out of fear that the Republicans “were seen to be blocking anti-smoking legislation at a time when the tobacco industry was by far the biggest soft-money donor to their party,” and “they’d be pummeled by the White House and the Democrats in the midterm elections.”<sup>25</sup>

A PICTURE OF WORKABLE GOVERNMENT: BEYOND  
THE "SMALL OR BIG GOVERNMENT" DEBATE

After this multi-faceted framing, Clinton brought in another strategy for promoting the agenda so that he could stay with the idea of a workable government by going the "third way." He would offer the nation helpful federal services and still manage to balance the budget, thereby crossing the line between big and small government. As the debate developed, he came to focus on how to save and to spend money, or how to pay for his initial anti-tobacco programs and research as well as for his other policy initiatives such as child care and education.

Following the \$368.5 billion settlement reached by the major tobacco companies and forty state attorneys general on June 21, 1997, Clinton approved the agreement in principle. But he proposed tougher measures: a cigarette price hike of \$1.10 per pack over five years, full authority for the FDA to regulate tobacco products, and stiffer penalties to be imposed on the industry for failing to meet the target of reducing teen smoking. He again argued strongly for his initiative in the 1998 State of the Union address and pushed Congress to take legislative action.<sup>26</sup> Since Congress traditionally has dismissed or watered down bills that would hurt Big Tobacco, and might do so again,<sup>27</sup> the White House took the opportunity provided by the settlement "to make tobacco an achievement, not an issue."<sup>28</sup> For this he needed a governing coalition strategy that would include compromises, and he developed his communications strategies accordingly.

IV CHILDREN AND MONEY: STRATEGIES FOR  
CONTROLLING THE DEBATE

Clinton succeeded in setting a national agenda in his own frame when on April 1, 1998, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee approved a comprehensive bipartisan tobacco bill by 19 votes to 1. This bill, sponsored by Republican Chairman John McCain, included tougher measures against the tobacco industry than the 1997 settlement. Cigarette prices would rise by \$1.10 per pack over five years, not the sixty-two cents negotiated in the settlement that would be imposed only if the target of reducing teen smoking was not met. There would be a payment from the industry of \$516 billion over 25 years, compared with the original \$368.5 billion. Toughest of all, there would

be a withdrawal of the agreed legal immunity of the industry from class action suits. Clinton rallied support for this bill, which met his objectives but was controversial because it was not clear how the tobacco money and tax revenues would be used and because of its stiffened legal responsibility for the industry.<sup>29</sup>

#### STRATEGIC CONTROL OF DEBATE

As mentioned earlier, Clinton's strategic communications and leadership had three focal points—responsiveness, spin control, and coalition—in the policy debate. In controlling the policy debate then under way, Clinton seemed to use a threefold strategy by being very vocal and employing any available means for spin control, keeping opponents silent, and doing whatever else was possible to preserve the agenda and to keep it alive.

First, Clinton used a variety of means such as press conferences and town meetings to convey to the nation his firm stand on tobacco regulation and a need for legislation. He even had talks with tobacco farmers, which could be interpreted as a sign of support from most of the nation.<sup>30</sup> From April 9 to June 20, he referred to tobacco in ten of his addresses or remarks.<sup>31</sup> He also used electronic communication networks (e.g. the Internet) in collaboration with federal agencies to provide convincing data and information. He helped to organize multimedia campaigns, which he proposed that the FDA should employ in 1995, particularly at the grass-roots level. The national debate was thus sustained by a team comprising a "Regulator and a President" and their surrogates such as public health activists.<sup>32</sup>

Second, Clinton was careful not to give legitimacy to the arguments of his opponents. For example, he proposed that the tobacco companies should refrain from selling to and aiming advertisements at children, but not adults who could enjoy the freedom of choice. He even approved, at first, the June 1997 settlement, which required the tobacco industry to stop sales to children through self-imposed controls, rather than through law, on the condition that these controls were monitored by the FDA. He warned the Republicans, despite his original harsh criticism of activities aimed at children, that the Republican proposals for a ban on advertisements might be "unconstitutional" in terms of freedom of speech.<sup>33</sup> This strategy intended to silence potential opponents and to find a middle way, a pragmatic common ground on which to get things done.

Third, and most important, Clinton devoted himself to preserving the agenda and to blocking the possibility that Congress would “pick-to-death” the tobacco bill. According to Alexis Simendinger in the *National Journal*, Clinton “made it politically uncomfortable for any lawmaker to just say no.” Simendinger claimed that Clinton strategically linked the legislation with public health concerns about children smoking so that congressmen, preparing for the 1998 elections, would not abstain from the debate in case they would be seen as doing so in the interests of the tobacco companies. Clinton also had “taken the debate beyond ‘if’ there is legislation to ‘what’ it will accomplish and how the tobacco money could be spent.” He did it by assuming there would be billions of dollars in tobacco receipts—\$65.5 billion over five years—in his fiscal 1999 budget and by linking the money to “feel-good proposals” for medical research, child care, and new teachers. Clinton was also “careful not to call the cigarette price hike a tax, inviting Congress to think of it as industry payments or fees.” In other words, he intended to defend against Republican attacks on the “tax-and-spend” Democrats. Simendinger critically viewed this strategy as “politicizing the issue, making it harder to resolve.”<sup>34</sup> But in fact this strategy offered incentives, “a kind of gold rush,” for Congress to stay with the bill, which they might count on to fund tax cuts or Social Security plans.<sup>35</sup> In order to keep the debate alive, Clinton even sought a middle way by agreeing to some of the compensatory tax cuts demanded by the Republicans and even by suggesting to consider lowering the extent of legal liability for the industry.

Thus Clinton energetically campaigned for his agenda through strategic controls of debate. Gibbs noted that “no single domestic-policy issue has consumed so much of Clinton’s public time and attention” since it was introduced. The press, including Gibbs, was cynical in suspecting Clinton’s intentions for the agenda, and focused on two strategic implications of the tobacco deal for his presidency. One pertained to how his programs, for example those suggested in the 1998 State of the Union address, would be funded by the tobacco revenue. The other was to “show that Clinton was still in the game” after he had been foiled repeatedly when moving his plans through Congress despite “his shiny approval ratings.”<sup>36</sup> The press seemed to be not only interested in the future of the bill but also—or even much more—in Clinton’s responsive leadership.

Despite his campaign and the approval by the Commerce Committee, the Senate did not pass the bill—53 were opposed while 46 agreed—and

it was sent back to the Committee on June 17. The press again cynically responded to the outcome and predicted a dim future for Clinton's leadership. For example, one writer blamed "both Republican intransigence and his own inability to summon a governing coalition for the centrist agenda he laid out with great flourish" earlier in the year and added that "his once-bright hopes for building a significant domestic policy record this year now look decidedly dim."<sup>37</sup> The press, however, did not mention their own responsibility for why the bill was not passed or, in other words, how their cynical view could have possibly affected the policy debate. We will discuss this in the last section.

#### DIVERGENT FRAMES AND LOST SPIN CONTROL

Returning to Clinton's strategies, how is he to blame, particularly concerning communications? There are two points. First, Clinton failed to control divergent frames applied in the policy debate. Secondly, he also failed to assure the public that his initiative would work well and truly contribute to resolving the problem. These failures indicate his loss of spin control in the debate war, presumably because of powerful counter-framing and insufficient feedback from the public, to which might be added possible diversion because of legal and public interest in his affair with Monica Lewinsky.<sup>38</sup>

When commenting on the failure of the Senate to pass its bill, Clinton argued that "if more members of the Senate would vote like parents rather than politicians, we could solve this problem" and criticized Congress for voting "against our children and for the tobacco lobby." Yet, Clinton shared part of the blame because his own framing of the agenda was too elaborate and therefore vulnerable. One problem was that his multi-faceted framing shifted the focus from his original theme of "kids versus Big Tobacco" to "how to save the money for Social Security or other programs," which set the stage for debate among parties looking for funds.<sup>39</sup> Republicans then persisted to seek financing for their two conventional agendas, cutting taxes and the war on drugs, and shifted the debate to their benefit. Accordingly, vocal opponents such as Senator Phil Gramm argued against the "Big Brother" bill, implying that more taxes would be required and government would get bigger, which he said "had no support in America."<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, even presented a counter-frame to oppose Clinton's version of the "cause" of children smoking. He

ascribed it to the impact of Hollywood movies that depicted smoking as fashionable, rather than that of tobacco advertisements, notably those with the animal character “Joe Camel” which Clinton claimed induced children to smoke. Gingrich intended to criticize an industry that is one of the biggest contributors to the Democratic Party and a powerful supporter of Clinton, thus countering the Democrats who had been emphasizing the close connections between his party and the tobacco industry.<sup>41</sup>

Another problem was the advertising blitz sponsored by the tobacco industry, amounting to forty million dollars over eight weeks, which strongly supported the “tax and spend” assaults on Clinton and the Democrats. Aimed at killing the bill, these advertisements posed a question about whether the cigarette price hikes would decrease the number of underaged smokers, and they suggested that a black market would come into existence if prices became too high. The advertisements also were designed to make congressmen worry that they might offend big donors or lose votes if they supported the bill, while lobbyists for the industry reportedly promised to help them with campaign advertising if they voted against the bill.<sup>42</sup>

Clinton assailed this campaign, calling it an “absolutely false” attempt to distract attention from the tobacco industry’s complicity in misleading the nation about the dangers of tobacco. He described its tactics as tempting the voters to “channel your well-known hatred of government and taxes against this bill.” He bemoaned the fact that public health groups which supported the bill did not have enough money to reply to the advertisements with their own, and he noted that “unanswered ads can sometimes be fatal.” He did not, however, help by having his own “issue advertisements” printed and aired as he did when he faced a similar formidable wave of campaigning against his 1994 health care reform plan.<sup>43</sup> It might be argued that he did not defend in this way partly because the financing of his 1996 campaign was being investigated by the Justice Department, which was also interested in his previous advertisements.

#### INSUFFICIENT COMMUNICATION FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC

Under these circumstances, Clinton failed to lead and to convince the public that his proposal would work well and be the best remedy for the problem. At first the public seemed to agree with his story line that was targeted at parents. A Gallup poll in August 1996 showed that 63% of the nation approved Clinton’s policies on tobacco and smoking and wel-

comed his packaged agenda.<sup>44</sup> Public opinion and the influential press were impressed with his firm stand concerning the June 1997 tobacco settlement, even though they were still undecided on what options would be best for curbing teen smoking.<sup>45</sup>

As the debate continued, however, he shifted its focus from a matter of children and parents to one of money. "How to pay" for his "parents" package came to the fore in the debate, but he did not fully explain how his initiative would substantially contribute to curbs on teen smoking. It is certain that the public obviously favored his nicely packaged agenda as enunciated in the 1998 State of the Union address,<sup>46</sup> but the tobacco initiative might still have been seen as a tool rather than an objective of his government. We can speculate that this perception became more pronounced while Congress was debating the bill and the tobacco industry was running its advertisements. According to the poll conducted by NBC in mid April 1998, people were leaning more toward the Republican frame than Clinton's. Asked about the suspected intentions of the tobacco bill, 70% of the respondents said it was "getting additional tax revenue for the federal government," while only 20% found it "cutting teen smoking by raising cigarette prices." According to this poll, public opinion on passing the bill was completely split: 47% felt that Congress should pass it, and 48% thought it should be rejected.<sup>47</sup>

While public opinion fluctuated on the Senate bill, Clinton tried to persuade the public to support his tobacco initiative as they had at its inception. His campaign seemed partly successful. CNN released the results of a poll it conducted on May 11, which showed that 87% of the nation favored restrictions on tobacco sales to minors and that 59% favored cigarette price hikes, even though a majority was skeptical about federal regulation of tobacco as a drug. Another CNN poll, conducted after the bill was defeated by the Senate and released on July 24, showed that support for the Clinton frame had increased to 41%, although 50% viewed the bill as a "tax-and-spend" issue, as did the Republicans.

Clinton could have read these shifts in public opinion and tried to achieve his goal by seeking opinions and feedback that could be fed into his spin control machines. He nevertheless failed at his own game. For example, when some experts cast doubt on the data Clinton presented to justify federal regulation, he did not seem to argue with them and thereby left the public skeptical about its justifiability.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, he lost the initiative at the final stage of the spin war. When the congressional debate came close to finishing, three poll findings on the tobacco bill were



released. One, conducted by Republican pollster Linda Divall on July 9, revealed that 69% of the respondents said that supporters of the bill were seeking to increase tax revenue rather than trying to curb teen smoking. The second was conducted for the White House and the public health coalition Effective National Action to Control Tobacco (ENACT) and found that registered voters supported the bill by a 2-to-1 margin. A similar result was obtained by the third poll, conducted by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center. The Divall poll offered Republican senators a reason to vote against the bill, and it was only “after” the bill was defeated, even though it was within 24 hours, that Democratic pollsters and a White House strategist counter-argued that the Republicans, captives of Big Tobacco, had misinterpreted the public sentiment. They claimed that the public wanted “some” bill, although not necessarily “this” one.<sup>49</sup>

The press also had a role in Clinton’s insufficient feedback with the public. Along with the tobacco debate, the press had paid a great deal of attention to Clinton’s sex scandals despite his attempts to focus on getting the tobacco bill passed. This created two obstacles that made it difficult for him to communicate with the public. As the media diverted attention from tobacco and substantial policy debates to his sexual escapades, he failed to retain sufficient opportunities or time and space in the press to keep public attention on his agenda. Moreover, Clinton’s aides for communications and press relations, as well as his surrogates, were preoccupied with rebuttals and press scrutiny in regard to the allegations of improper behavior, and thereby were unable to speak for him on the agenda.<sup>50</sup>

Certainly Clinton was partly responsible for the bill being defeated since his sexual improprieties created an environment for the media to probe into his behavior and also inhibited his ability to persuade the public and the Senate to support the bill. We can presume that his “kids versus Big Tobacco” framing seemed less plausible in the eyes of the targeted parents, who were fed up with his infidelity and possible perjury, which made his concern about children and family values suspect. Nevertheless, it should still be noted that the weakened power of the president to “moderate” the debate to reach a national as well as a political consensus during this period, and accordingly the irreconcilable frames proposed by the two political parties, led the public to believe that the debate had lost perspective of the original aims of the bill on the one hand and, on the other, legitimized and even energized the campaign of the tobacco companies to defeat the bill.



## V DISCUSSION: IS THE MEDIA RESPONSIBLE?

While Clinton failed to reach a national and political consensus and to achieve one of the most important objectives of his second term, he is not the only loser in the tobacco war. The other losers are not his allies, the advocacy groups, and victims of tobacco, but the parents. What they acquired with the defeated Senate bill was not simply disappointment, but also a deepening cynicism toward the works of the government, the partisan Congress, and, possibly, the negatively inclined press. Finally, we will suggest two possible ways that the press affected the course of the debate on tobacco and discuss the implications of these for the modern presidency in the age of a powerful media.

## THE ATTACK CULTURE AND POLITICAL SHOWDOWN

One possible way in which the press affected the tobacco debate is that it contributed to justifying or even accelerating the debate on the basis of partisanship. The American public seemed not to want this since polls showed that a majority of them agreed with curbs on teen smoking, even if they did not specifically endorse the McCain bill. Although the public might have hoped that politicians could share vocabularies, concerns, and values with them, and also with each other, to attain a reasonable national consensus, politics in America is a world of "show-down," to use a cliché from the press, in which politicians appear to be in conflict with, accusing, and attacking each other to seek personal and partisan advantages at the expense of the public interest.

This is what Robert Samuelson, a *Washington Post* columnist, sees in contemporary Washington politics, especially in the turbulent days of investigation into Clinton's conduct.<sup>51</sup> He calls it the "attack culture," in which the press but not the public participates. Although people might enjoy a dramatized political spectacle, at the same time they are concerned that investigations by Congress, the press, independent counsels, and prosecutors may go too far and become disconnected from common sense and common decency. They feel that the attack culture diminishes accountability in government, and Samuelson perceived a backlash against this culture in the public ambivalence shown in polls. A majority of the people do not trust Clinton personally, but his job approval ratings have remained as high as approximately 60% from January to August of 1998. He concludes that Clinton has benefited, in part, from public sympathy for the targets of this attack culture.

As far as public cynicism is concerned, the press can be criticized for its attack culture and routine dependence on a showdown frame. It prefers to focus on conflicts rather than consensus, unspoken strategies and motives rather than spoken words, and on a political “horse race” rather than substantial details in policy debates. The press sometimes applies this frame even when a consensus does in fact exist, as Cappella and Jamieson suggested in their discussion of how “conflicts” between Clinton and Gingrich were covered and how the way politics are covered might affect public cynicism.<sup>52</sup> While we have not conducted a content analysis of the news coverage of the tobacco debate, the press seemed to focus on how difficult—rather than how feasible—it would be for parties to reach an agreement on this issue. It reported lurid episodes of struggles for money and votes, stories of conspiracies and deceit behind the scenes, and a strained relationship between the President and Congress.

Even when we admit that all this reflects the way politics is conducted, the press could still focus on the common ground of policy objectives and weigh arguments in terms of practical effects on resolution. In the very least, the press should not “get in the way” of politicians who challenge what is on a difficult agenda. James Fallows, a former Washington editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, presents a case of this in regard to Clinton’s 1994 health care reform plan,<sup>53</sup> and we can suspect that several of the press performances referred to by Fallows reappeared in the tobacco case. For example, the press focused on the advertisement campaigns countering Clinton’s initiatives as business-as-usual in the Washington spin wars, which paradoxically caused people to pay more attention to the advertisements and to perceive the dissidents as more vocal than they actually were. The press also enjoyed treating politics as a horse race and ended up presenting a sinister view of the defeat of the tobacco bill and the weakened power of the President, suggesting that there was no future for the administration as well as for Clinton’s proposals. Popular cynicism about politics is deepened by media coverage that is inclined to emphasize these aspects, the dark side of the modern political process.<sup>54</sup>

#### MEDIA FRENZIES OVER THE PRESIDENT’S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FACES

The press can also get in the way by paying too much attention to the private lives of politicians. Certainly the press should inform the public

and thus should criticize those in power, as demonstrated by some laudable works of investigative reporting on the tobacco business.<sup>55</sup> Its appetite for disclosing information from "behind the scenes" leads to crossing conventional boundaries between the public and the private,<sup>56</sup> and covering some personal issues might even help the public become familiar with politicians and politics.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, the press may be criticized for these transgressions if they divert time and space from coverage of substantial policy discussions. The press has long focused on Clinton's "dark" personal side, or on his distinct public and private characters, and he has suffered from this sort of press scrutiny since the beginning of his political career.<sup>58</sup> The press sometimes excuses itself by saying that it offers what the public wants, yet a gap exists between what the public actually wants to know about politics and what the press believes to be the case. A poll conducted after the 1998 State of the Union address showed that a majority of the people were tired of coverage of the President's scandals and even suspected that the press was interested in "getting it first" rather than "getting it right."<sup>59</sup> Even after the focus shifted from the sex scandals to the alleged perjury and possible impeachment of the President, a majority of the people still found the press to be paying too much attention to his affair with Lewinsky and wanted it to address more important issues such as measures to defend against terrorism.<sup>60</sup>

As Samuelson put it, public ambivalence over personal evaluation and job approval can be accounted for, in part, by this gap between the people and those "inside the beltway." People seem to value the president's public work and accomplishments first and foremost, not his supremacy as a leader or his sexual morality as a person. Public ambivalence also could be a sign that people now long for a presidency that functions well, as part of a government working to benefit the people first. People may wish to see in him part of a system that can work, and this is exactly what Clinton's strategic leadership and communications aims for as it uses its resources to focus on his public work, while evading attacks from the press and his rivals.<sup>61</sup>

The question is how far this "predominance-of-the-public-over-the-private" strategy works for his presidency. In the tobacco debate, Clinton's business-as-usual style and the shift of focus failed him. After a federal judge dismissed Paula Jones's sexual harassment lawsuit against him on April 1, 1998, Clinton commented that the decision was in the interests of the American people. He said it would make him

“freer” to focus attention on important issues such as tobacco, education, and Social Security.<sup>62</sup> However, because of the attention paid to his affair with Lewinsky, he could not move these issues along by taking the initiative in debates. To blame were the media frenzy, partisan moves in and out of Congress, Clinton’s lack of resources, his tactical failures, and even his other burdens at home and abroad.

We will suggest here one more factor, the nature of his agenda in the tobacco war. Tobacco is a subtle issue because it concerns the personal lives of people, as have many other agendas proposed by Clinton who likes to target particularly the baby-boomer parents. His agenda for the people fits the common slogan of the baby boomer generation, “the personal is the political.” Framing the tobacco agenda as an appealing “personal-as-well-as-political” issue would bring personal values into the public policy debate. Those who are parents may share the values in his agendas or even accept his “parent” framing of tobacco, so they may feel betrayed as parents when they hear or read about his misbehavior. This creates a situation in which the personal rebounds into the public domain in people’s minds. Despite their *stated* interest in values, but not in the President’s morals, parents tend to intertwine them and thereby twist a possible advantage in Clinton’s strategic leadership into a disadvantage.

Another risk of Clinton’s “campaign-like” governing strategies rests in his crammed package of agendas. Each agenda represents a symbol and constitutes a part of the whole blueprint of his responsive presidency. The linkages were not only rhetorical but also substantial in the tobacco case since the tobacco money might be used for funding other initiatives. Failure in the tobacco agenda goes far to invite the perception, mainly in the press, that his government will fail to produce important outcomes and has fallen into a “lame duck” situation. This view might handicap him as a player in perception politics and in getting new tobacco legislation enacted, partly because Congress will feel less pressured by the President and even by the press that is devoted to his personal problems.<sup>63</sup>

Clinton responds to people as a public official, even when he pretends to establish a personal form of communication with his audience by presenting himself in an intimate style and talking about the daily concerns of people. His work and messages should be evaluated in this context. If, however, the press confuses the character and style of “the messenger” with his “message,” and if the responsive and personal-as-well-as-public nature of Clinton’s government is not a strategy, but a philosophy,

this performance of the press might have contributed not just to defeating the tobacco bill, but to weakening the presidency.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Dee Dee Myers, "New Technologies and the 1992 Clinton Presidential Campaign," *American Behavioral Scientist* 37, no.2 (1993): 181-187.

<sup>2</sup> See Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro, "Public Opinion in President Clinton's First Year: Leadership and Responsiveness," in *The Clinton Presidency*, ed. S.A. Renshon (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995), 195-211.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Susan Wagner, *Cigarette Country* (New York: Praeger, 1971); Philip J. Hilts, *Smokescreen* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996); and Glenn Frankel, "Decades after Declaration, War on Smoking Begins," *Washington Post*, 24 August 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Outline given by Robert V. Friedenberg in *Communication Consultants in Political Campaigns* (New York: Praeger, 1997), chapters 1 and 7.

<sup>5</sup> Craig A. Smith, "Rough Stretches and Honest Disagreements: Is Bill Clinton Redefining the Rhetorical Presidency?" in *The Clinton Presidency*, eds. R. E. Denton, Jr. and R. L. Holloway (New York: Praeger, 1996), 225-247.

<sup>6</sup> Jacobs and Shapiro, "Public Opinion," 195-211.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce I. Newman, *The Marketing of the President* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1994), 22 and, for his model of political marketing, 11-23.

<sup>8</sup> The argument here was developed further by the author in "Kurinton to 'Fokasu Gurupu Daitoryosei'" ["Clinton and the 'Focus-Group Presidency'"], *Saitama Daigaku Kiyō: Kyoyogakubu/Saitama University Review* 33, no.2 (1997): 111-154 (in Japanese). See also Elisabeth Kolbert, "Test-Marketing a President," *New York Times Magazine*, 30 August 1992.

<sup>9</sup> John A. Maltese defines the term in *Spin Control*, 2d ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 215-216: "to manipulate not only what administration officials are saying but also what the media are saying about them. Spinning a story involves twisting it to one's advantage, using surrogates, press releases, radio actualities, and other friendly sources to deliver the line from an angle that puts the story in the best possible light."

<sup>10</sup> S. J. Ball-Rokeach, G. J. Power, K. K. Guthrie, and H. R. Waring, "Value-Framing Abortion in the United States," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 2 (1990): 249-273.

<sup>11</sup> Seiichi Kondo, *Yugamerareru Nihon Imeji [The Distorted Image of Japan]* (Tokyo: Simul Press, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> An example of this sort of spin is discussed in Michael Kelly, "Clinton's Economic Plan," *New York Times*, 18 February 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Dick Morris, *Behind the Oval Office* (New York: Random House, 1997), 80-85.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, "Rough Stretches," 225-247.

<sup>15</sup> Alan Greenblatt, "Amendments and Ads Bury 'Inviolable' Tobacco Bill," *Congressional Quarterly* (20 June 1998), 1670-1671.

<sup>16</sup> For a chronology of these discussions, see *The Washington Post Index* (annual, Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI) and CDC-TIPS (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Tobacco Information and Prevention Source), accessible on the web (<http://www.cdc.gov/>).

<sup>17</sup> His first remark on the war on tobacco, dated August 10, 1995, is available from the *Federal News Service*, an on-line data source of the *Lexis-Nexis* database (<http://www.lexis-nexis.com/>). See also “Key Elements of the President’s Plan to Reduce Children’s Use of Tobacco,” dated August 23, 1996, on the web site for the Health and Human Services (<http://www.hhs.gov/>).

<sup>18</sup> CDC-TIPS, “Targeting Tobacco Use: At-A-Glance 1998.”

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Hilts, *Smokescreen*, particularly chapters 7–9 and 11–13. Besides the actors noted here, agencies such as the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Trade Commission have also played key roles in monitoring tobacco and its marketing.

<sup>20</sup> This was his first remark on restricting tobacco advertisements and dated to August 10, 1995. See the *Federal News Service* (see note 17).

<sup>21</sup> Gallup polls conducted from 1987 to 1994 revealed that an increasing number of people have been opposed to smoking in public places, while a majority agreed with the idea to “set aside areas” for smokers rather than either to ban smoking or to have no restrictions. See *The Gallup Poll Monthly*, March 1994. In a 1997 poll which asked who was to blame for the health problems of smokers, a majority of the respondents ascribed it completely or mostly to individual smokers, while 25% blamed tobacco companies and 10% answered “both equally” (*The Gallup Poll Monthly*, May 1997).

<sup>22</sup> Ceci Connolly and John Mintz, “3 Allies, 3 Motives for War on Tobacco,” *Washington Post*, 31 March 1998.

<sup>23</sup> Morris, *Behind the Oval Office*, 207–234, 293–308.

<sup>24</sup> Cited from the transcript available from the *New York Times* on the web (<http://www.nytimes.com/specials/issues/ihome/debate6.html>). The first presidential debate, held on October 6, 1996 at the Bushnell Theater in Hartford, Connecticut, and moderated by Jim Lehrer from PBS, dealt with nearly two dozen issues including that of campaign financing.

<sup>25</sup> Nancy Gibbs, “Up in Smoke,” *Time*, 29 June 1998, 42–44.

<sup>26</sup> Clinton delivered the 1998 State of the Union Address on January 27 and demanded that Congress pass some tobacco legislation:

we must help parents protect their children from the gravest health threat that they face: an epidemic of teen smoking spread by multimillion dollar marketing campaigns. I challenge Congress. Let’s pass bipartisan, comprehensive legislation that will improve public health, protect our tobacco farmers, and change the way tobacco companies do business forever. Let’s do what it takes to bring teen smoking down. Let’s raise the price of cigarettes by up to \$1.50 a pack over the next 10 years, with penalties on the tobacco industry if it keeps marketing to our children. Now tomorrow, like every day, 3,000 children will start smoking, and a thousand will die early as a result. Let this Congress be remembered as the Congress that saved their lives.

The full text of the address is available from the *Federal News Service* (see note 17), and more information about it is in note 36.

<sup>27</sup> See Hilts, *Smokescreen*, chapters 11 and 12.

<sup>28</sup> John F. Harris and Ceci Connolly, “Clinton Suffers Major Defeat on Tobacco,” *Washington Post*, 18 June 1998.

<sup>29</sup> Issues in the debate were: the amount of payment for medical and other related costs by the tobacco industry and the level and period of cigarette tax hikes, the legal liability of the industry (immunity from class-action lawsuits and an annual ceiling limit on damages from legal claims), the FDA’s authority for regulation, and how to spend the payment made by the industry (research and prevention programs, protection of tobacco farmers, spending on drug-control programs).

<sup>30</sup> See Ceci Connolly, “‘At War’ with Tobacco, Clinton Woos Farmers,” *Washington*



*Post*, 10 April 1998. Clinton met with tobacco growers in Kentucky the day after the nation's leading cigarette manufacturers declared they were abandoning negotiations on Capitol Hill.

<sup>31</sup> Data from the *Federal News Service* (see note 17). Those referring to tobacco during the three months were "Remarks by Clinton upon Return from Chicago" (given on April 9), "Panel Discussion with Clinton and Tobacco Farmers" (April 9), "Clinton Remarks at Rose Garden Event" (April 20), "Clinton Remarks on 1998 Legislative Agendas" (April 21), "Clinton Remarks at Rose Garden Event" (April 27), "Statement by Clinton" (May 14), "Clinton Remarks at White House Event" (May 20), "Clinton Weekly Radio Address" (June 6), "Clinton Statement on Tobacco" (June 17), and "Clinton Remarks" (June 20).

<sup>32</sup> See Frankel, "Decades after Declaration."

<sup>33</sup> See David E. Rosenbaum, "White House Warns Congress Tobacco Ad Limits May Be Unconstitutional," *New York Times*, 3 March 1998.

<sup>34</sup> Alexis Simendinger, "A Strategy, of Sorts, on Tobacco," *National Journal* (14 February 1998), 350-351.

<sup>35</sup> Remark given by *Wall Street Journal* columnist Paul Gigot on the PBS program *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, 10 April 1998. For political motives and shifting frames, also see David E. Rosenbaum, "Politics of Tobacco: Taxes vs. Kids," *New York Times*, 21 June 1998.

<sup>36</sup> Gibbs, "Up in Smoke," 44. In his 1998 State of the Union Address, Clinton referred first to the federal deficit, and then to a variety of domestic agendas including the budget for targeted tax cuts and Social Security, minimum wage for laborers, education, welfare, health care, tobacco (see note 26 for a quotation), child care, crime and drug use, smaller government, pollution, food safety, environment, race, medical research, and the Internet. See the *Federal News Service* (note 17) for details.

<sup>37</sup> John F. Harris, "Clinton's Domestic Policy Hopes Fade," *Washington Post*, 21 June 1998.

<sup>38</sup> The 1998 tobacco debate took place at the same time as investigations into Clinton's affair with Lewinsky, the chronology being: after the press reported about Lewinsky, the President denied allegations of a sexual relationship and of suborning perjury (21 January); Clinton was subpoenaed by a grand jury (17 July); after testifying before the grand jury, he publicly acknowledged an improper relationship (17 August); Kenneth Starr, the Independent Counsel, submitted his report with details about the affair to Congress (9 September); tapes of Clinton's testimony were released by Congress to the public (21 September); the House of Representatives approved an open-ended impeachment inquiry into the President (8 October); the House of Representatives impeached the President, charging him with perjury before a grand jury and obstruction of justice (19 December); the impeachment trial of President Clinton began in the Senate (7 January 1999); and the Senate acquitted the President on two articles of impeachment, falling short of a majority vote on either of the charges against him (12 February 1999).

<sup>39</sup> Remark given by Paul Gigot on *NewsHour*, 19 April 1998.

<sup>40</sup> See Greenblatt, "Amendments and Ads," 1669.

<sup>41</sup> See Alison Mitchell, "Warfare over Tobacco Bill Could Make It or Break It," *New York Times*, 27 April 1998.

<sup>42</sup> Tobacco companies also ran advertisements in newspapers to counter Clinton's tobacco plan after his 1995 proposal. For the 1998 campaign and its impact, see Melinda Henneberger, "Tobacco Industry's Ad Campaign Strikes a Responsive Chord," *New York Times*, 22 May 1998; and Sandra Torry and Helen Dewar, "Big Tobacco's Ad

Blitz Felt in Senate Debate,” *Washington Post*, 17 June 1998. In mid August, the Justice Department looked into allegations that the industry had offered some Republican senators favorable advertising, designed to provide “political cover” in exchange for votes against tobacco legislation. See Jeffrey Taylor, “Is Tobacco Industry Playing Politics with Issue Ads?” *Wall Street Journal*, 1 September 1998.

<sup>43</sup> Clinton’s comment was quoted and analyzed in Peter Baker and Sandra Torry, “Clinton Scolds Tobacco Lobby for Ad Campaign,” *Washington Post*, 16 June 1998.

<sup>44</sup> The Gallup poll on “Clinton Job Approval Ratings on Issues” was conducted on August 23–25, 1996. Of all the surveyed items, policies on tobacco and smoking acquired the highest approval, 63%, and education was the second highest (60% approved, 33% disapproved). In this survey, majorities approved his handling of diplomacy, the economy, education, crime, welfare, environmental issues, tobacco and smoking, and national defense.

<sup>45</sup> For the response of the press, see the *National Journal* (27 September 1997), 1919. For the public response, see Alexis Simendinger, “The Slow Burn on a Tobacco Deal,” *National Journal* (13 September 1997), 1794; and “Poll Detects Widespread Skepticism About Proposed Tobacco Deal,” *New York Times*, 30 August 1997. On public skepticism, the Gallup poll conducted on June 23–24, 1997 showed that (1) people were split over or uncertain about the settlement (asked whether the President and Congress should accept it as it was, 40% of the people had no opinion, while “approve” registered 20%, “make changes” 25%, and “should reject” 16%); (2) more than 60% agreed on (a) banning outdoor advertisements and vending machines and (b) the industry funding Medicaid for children, despite being split on the industry sponsoring events and its legal liability; and (3) nearly half of them did not believe that the settlement would contribute to a significant decline in the number of smokers (adults and teens) in the long run.

<sup>46</sup> The CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll, conducted immediately after the address and released on 27 January 1998, showed that 84% of the nation had a “very” or “somewhat” positive reaction to the speech. Clinton’s job approval rating also reached 67%, according to a *Washington Post* poll released on 1 February. See notes 26 and 36 for information about the address.

<sup>47</sup> NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll, released on 22 April 1998.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Barry Meier, “Politics of Youth Smoking Fueled by Unproven Data,” *New York Times*, 20 May 1998. According to Meier,

Social issues often spark unfounded claims cloaked in the reason of science. But the debate over smoking, politically packaged around the emotional subject of the health of children, is charged with hyperbole, some experts say. Politicians and policy makers have tossed out dozens of estimates about the impact of various strategies on youth smoking rates, figures that turn out to be based on projections rather than fact.

<sup>49</sup> For the spin war concerning these poll results, see Torry and Dewar, “Big Tobacco’s Ad Blitz.” The ENACT survey was released on 16 June in the “Statement 6/16/98: Poll: Americans want McCain tobacco bill passed, public health funding restored,” which can be accessed, for example, on the web site for the *Campaign for Tobacco-Free-Kids* ([http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/html/statement\\_6\\_16\\_98.html](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/html/statement_6_16_98.html)).

<sup>50</sup> See Gibbs, “Up in Smoke,” 42.

<sup>51</sup> Robert J. Samuelson, “The Attack Culture Revisited,” *Washington Post*, 26 August 1998.

<sup>52</sup> Joseph A. Cappella and Kathleen H. Jamieson, *Spiral of Cynicism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3–16.

<sup>53</sup> James Fallows, *Breaking the News* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996), 182–234.



<sup>54</sup> See the argument made by the *Washington Post* media critic Howard Kurtz in "Public Declines to Share Media's Sense of Betrayal," *Washington Post*, 15 September 1998.

<sup>55</sup> Examples from the *New York Times* are in Hilts, *Smokescreen*, particularly chapters 7–9 and 11–13.

<sup>56</sup> Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), chapters 5, 6, 8–11, and 13.

<sup>57</sup> Lisbett Van Zoonen, "A Tyranny of Intimacy? Women, Femininity and Television News," in *Communication and Citizenship*, eds. P. Dahlgren and C. Sparks (London: Routledge, 1991), 216–235.

<sup>58</sup> Press scrutiny and Clinton's press relations are examined in Martha Kumer, "President Clinton Meets the Media: Communications Shaped by Predictable Patterns," in *The Clinton Presidency*, ed. S. A. Renshon, 167–193. While some journalists and authors see many facets in Clinton's personality and governing style, others focus on his "two" faces or "double" lives, particularly after the news about his affair with Lewinsky broke out. For examples of the former, see David Maraniss, *First in His Class* (New York: Touchstone, 1995); and Todd Purdum, "Facets of Clinton," *New York Times Magazine*, 19 May 1996. Good examples of the latter are Jonathan Alter, "The Two Mr. Clintons," *Newsweek*, 24 August 1998, 22–26; and Robert D. McFadden, John Kifner and N. R. Kleinfield, "10 Days in the White House: Public Acts and Secret Trysts," *New York Times*, 14 September 1998.

<sup>59</sup> CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup poll released on January 29, 1998.

<sup>60</sup> See David S. Broder and Richard Morin, "American Voters See Two Very Different Bill Clintons," *Washington Post*, 23 August 1998, which showed that 76% of the nation still regarded the press to be paying too much attention to the Lewinsky scandal, two points higher than in January according to the *Washington Post*/ABC News polls. See also the Media Studies Center survey result, cited in Richard Morin, "Higher Marks for the Media," *Washington Post*, 7 September 1998.

<sup>61</sup> Focusing on Clinton's public work was to draw attention to his achievements and legitimate objectives, as well as to reduce interest in his personal life. Former Chief of Staff Leon Panetta and two former Presidential advisors, David Gergen and George Stephanopoulos, commented on this on ABC *Nightline*, "Clinton—Public Person, Private Life," aired on 15 September 1998.

<sup>62</sup> Peter Baker, "Clinton Says He Feels 'Freer' to Focus on Duties," *Washington Post*, 6 April 1998.

<sup>63</sup> See Helen Dewar, "As Congress Winds Up Work, Legislative Casualties Mount," *Washington Post*, 5 October 1998.