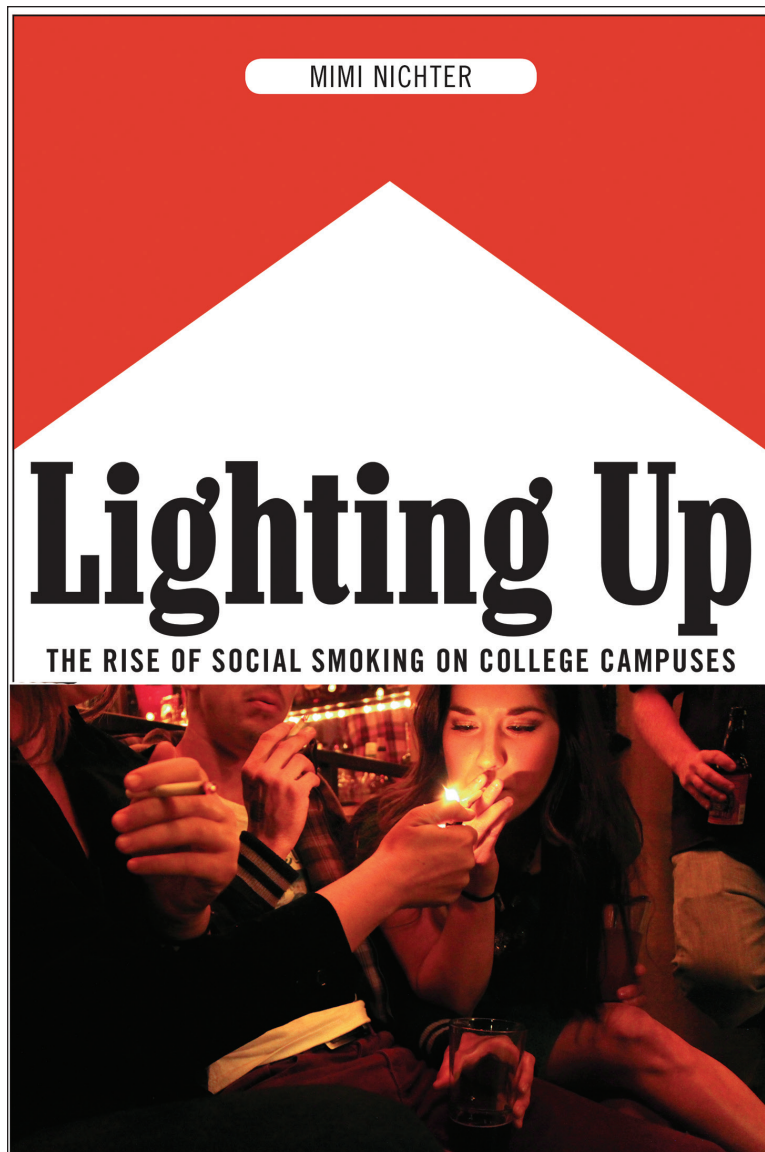


LIGHTING UP

THE RISE OF SOCIAL SMOKING ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE



272 PAGES • 8 B/W HALFTONES ILLUSTRATIONS
PAPER • 978-0-8147-5839-7

While the past 40 years have seen significant declines in adult smoking, this is not the case among young adults, who have the highest prevalence of smoking of all other age groups. At a time when just about everyone knows that smoking is bad for you, why do so many college students smoke? Drawing on interviews and focus groups with hundreds of young adults, *Lighting Up* takes the reader into their everyday lives to explore social smoking.

Mimi Nichter argues that we must understand more about the meaning of social and low level smoking to youth, the social contexts that cause them to take up (or not take up) the habit, and the way that smoking plays a large role in students' social lives. Nichter examines how smoking facilitates social interaction, helps young people express and explore their identity, and serves as a means for communicating emotional states. Most college students who smoked socially were confident that "this was no big deal." After all, they were "not really smokers" and they would only be smoking for a short time. But, as graduation neared, they expressed ambivalence or reluctance to quit. As many grads today step into an uncertain future, where the prospect of finding a good job in a timely manner is unlikely, their 20s may be a time of great stress and instability. For those who have come to depend on the comfort of cigarettes during college, this array of life stressors may make cutting back or quitting more difficult, despite one's intentions and understandings of the harms of tobacco. And emerging products on the market, like e-cigarettes, offer an opportunity to move from smoking to vaping. *Lighting Up* considers how smoking fits into the lives of young adults and how uncertain times may lead to uncertain smoking trajectories that reach into adulthood.

“It’s No Big Deal”

SUMMARY

This chapter provides an overview of smoking among college students in the U.S. While smoking among adults has reduced significantly in the past four decades, young adults are increasingly taking up the habit. Young adults, aged 18-25, have the highest prevalence of smoking when compared to all other age groups.

The college years are a key time for smoking experimentation and initiation even among those who have never tried smoking in high school. Survey results show that over 30 percent of college students smoked at least once in the past year and 25 percent report smoking at least once in the past month. Most college students who smoke are social smokers, meaning that they smoke at parties when consuming alcohol. While this may seem insignificant, it is important to note that about 60 percent of those who smoke at low levels (1-3 cigarettes per month) during their freshmen year will still be smoking when they are seniors.

An anthropological perspective contributes to our understanding of youth smoking. Moving beyond ideas about individual risk or susceptibility, this chapter explores the environments of risk (parties, bars, etc.) which facilitate the uptake of smoking. These social spaces can be thought of as breeding sites where smoking is initiated, fostered and normalized. The concept of risk is examined in context rather than in isolation. The larger environment of risk—the tobacco industry and its multibillion dollar marketing campaigns—is also discussed in terms of their investment in creating smoking as a normative and fun consumption activity.

“It’s No Big Deal”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- What is meant by the terms social, light or intermittent smoking?
Do you know people who engage in this kind of smoking?
- How have patterns of smoking changed in the U.S. over the last two decades?
- Why is smoking among young adults a particularly important health concern to public health researchers?
- Why do you think so many college students who smoke regularly at parties think of themselves as non-smokers? What are the implications of this?
- Thinking about people you know on campus, do they use the same kinds of rhetorical strategies to talk about their smoking as those described in this chapter? How do people you know talk about smoking?
- What are some of the strategies used by the tobacco industry to lead people to believe that they can be a “health conscious smoker”?
- What is a syndemic? How does it relate to tobacco use?
- What is the social ecology of health model? Why would it be useful in discussing youth smoking behavior?
- What does anthropology have to contribute to the study of tobacco?
What types of anthropological lenses does Nichter apply to this behavior?

EXPANDED ACTIVITY

The purpose of this activity is to get students to consider and articulate what they have heard about smoking from their friends, family members, or the media. Divide the class into small groups. Students should be asked to first discuss among themselves whether smoking at parties should be considered “a big deal” or whether they feel that because it is only done occasionally it’s nothing to be concerned about. Ask them to consider the question “Does it matter that those who smoke socially don’t consider themselves smokers?” Encourage students to draw on their personal experience and observation of friends in their discussion. After some time, each group can be asked to present their “findings.”

Profiles and Progressions

SUMMARY

Through a presentation of case studies of seven young adults, this chapter explores different patterns of smoking, which range from those who smoke occasionally at parties while drinking to those who smoke on a daily or near daily basis. All of the early episodes of smoking described by these individuals took place in the presence of others—either coworkers or friends—who were also smoking, and many of these smoking experiences were in the form of sharing a cigarette with others. Co-substance use was common, either with drinking alcohol or with smoking marijuana. Across all these stories, we see how smoking is a normative behavior in the party context at college, and how friends and family influence smoking trajectories.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What does it mean to say that smoking has utility functions?
- What types of utilities do these smokers describe?
- Thinking about yourself and your social network, are there any of these case studies that you can particularly relate to?
- What types of social contexts seem to give rise to smoking experiences? From your observation, do these social contexts facilitate smoking on your campus?
- What is meant by the term “cultural capital”? How does it relate to smoking? What other types of capital (i.e., social, symbolic) may be operating among those who are smoking socially?

EXPANDED ACTIVITY

This activity draws on ideas that students may have heard discussed among friends in their social network. Break the class into small groups. Ask students to discuss the idea presented in Josh’s case study (Recall that Josh is a 5th year senior who had been enjoying smoking for several years in a variety of social contexts). Josh savored the indulgence of smoking and felt it was empowering, particularly in today’s anti smoking environment. After discussing this idea (if they believe smoking can be empowering and if so, how and why; for those who do not feel it is empowering, express why it is not) Ask students to take a stand—either agreeing or disagreeing with the idea. Ask a member of each group to present the groups’ thoughts to the class.

Smoking and Drinking: “It’s Like Milk and Cookies!”

SUMMARY

Freshmen year on campus is a time of new freedom and opportunities, a time when young adults try on new selves and experiment with self image. Smoking and drinking are important in this process of adopting new identities. The chapter introduces the concept of “play,” referring to a time when one is engaged outside of one’s usual routine. Play time is a time and space where normative rules for behavior are suspended. At college parties, one steps out of their “real life” into a new social space. Playing with cigarettes allows young adults to take on a new identity, temporarily shifting their sense of self as well as others’ perception of them. The cigarette is a prop that facilitates the assumption of different roles, allowing one to play with different images.

Most students who were “party smokers” explained that when they were not drinking they rarely had a desire for a cigarette. However, after having a few drinks, cravings for a cigarette became strong—even among those who were novice smokers, meaning they had just smoked a few times. Interestingly, recent laboratory studies with very light smokers substantiate the experience of students. Findings reveal that urges to smoke increase significantly and rapidly following heavy drinking. Specifically, researchers found that urges to light up a cigarette occurred within a half hour of drinking and remained for several hours, even after one stopped drinking and their blood alcohol level had declined. These laboratory findings are important because they demonstrate that in addition to the social context (i.e. being at a party) that contributes to the desire to smoke, there is also a strong physiological component to this craving. It’s almost like a perfect storm for smoking initiation. Adopting a biosocial perspective allows us to look at how the social components of these behaviors interact with the biological components.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How is “binge drinking” defined by public health researchers?
What percentage of college students are engaging in this behavior?
Based on your observation of students on campus, how would you define binge drinking?
- Have you observed that people binge smoke at parties? How is binge drinking related to binge smoking?
- Why is co-substance use a concern among public health researchers and college administrators?

LIGHTING UP

Smoking and Drinking: “It’s Like Milk and Cookies!”

- According to the cultural historian Huizinga, what is the purpose of play? Why is the concept of play useful in our understanding of how drugs are used for recreational purposes?
- What do experimental studies of drinking and smoking tell us about co-substance use?
- What does it mean to “look at smoking through a biosocial lens?”

EXPANDED ACTIVITY:

In this chapter, we have read about the role of cigarettes at college parties, particularly among freshmen. Students have described how cigarettes can function as a useful prop that helps a person fit in at a party, can help you look like a person who isn’t boring—who has something to do, or can give you a few minutes to organize your thoughts if you’ve been drinking too much. Does this resonate with your experience at college parties? Thinking about your experiences, what does smoking say about a person? What image does it project at parties on the college campus?

What's Gender Got to Do with It?

SUMMARY

Although survey research on smoking on college campuses has consistently found few gender differences, ethnographic research found differences in norms and acceptability of smoking for women and men, ideas about smoking at different levels, as well as norms of sharing. In particular, the Greek system of sororities and fraternities were sites where scripted gendered performances were enforced and smoking among women was widely considered to be unladylike, trashy and slutty. Nonetheless, women did smoke at parties, often in a group with other women. This was a strategy that college women used to manage public perception of their smoking behavior. In other words, if “everyone” else was doing it, how could it look that bad?

While the social space of a weekend party was acceptable for smoking, particularly when surrounded by friends who were also smoking, young women needed to be conscious of how much they smoked. There was a consistent negative perception of women who smoked beyond what was considered to be an acceptable level—typically 3 to 5 cigarettes in an evening.

Outside of the party context, being seen smoking alone (for both women and men) was a marker that “something was wrong with a person”—that they had real problems that they thought cigarettes would help. For those who did smoke on weekdays, a strategy for not looking “like a loser who really needed a cigarette” was to talk on their cell phone while having a cigarette. This helped them appear as if they were with friends and not a lone smoker with problems.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- In this chapter, did men’s perceptions of women’s smoking differ from that expressed by women themselves?
- What strategies did women use to avoid looking trashy when smoking?
- Have you observed gender differences in smoking or drinking on your campus? Do the findings in this chapter on the inappropriateness of smoking for women also exist at your college?
- Is monitoring of friends’ behavior around drinking and smoking a practice that you and your friends have done at parties? Do you think it is important to do so? Is it a behavior that you consciously discuss or plan before going out?

What's Gender Got to Do with It?

- In what way is monitoring your friend's smoking and drinking at parties a gendered behavior? In other words, do you think monitoring is more common among women than among men?
- Do you think that monitoring in some social groups is more common than in others?
- It appears from the literature that women are consuming more alcohol nowadays when compared to a decade ago. Do you think standards for how much women can drink or smoke at a party are changing? How so? If yes, what are some of the factors fostering change?
- Pierre Bourdieu observed that at a young age, women accept male power and gender domination, internalizing and reproducing a gendered social order. Do you agree with this portrayal of women? How would you critique it? How does this relate to smoking?
- Have you expressed overt disapproval or acceptance of friends or family members smoking?

EXPANDED ACTIVITY 1

Divide the class into small groups of women and men. You may want to keep some groups women-only and others men-only. The group should explore gendered ideas of smoking. Some questions that can be raised in the group are:

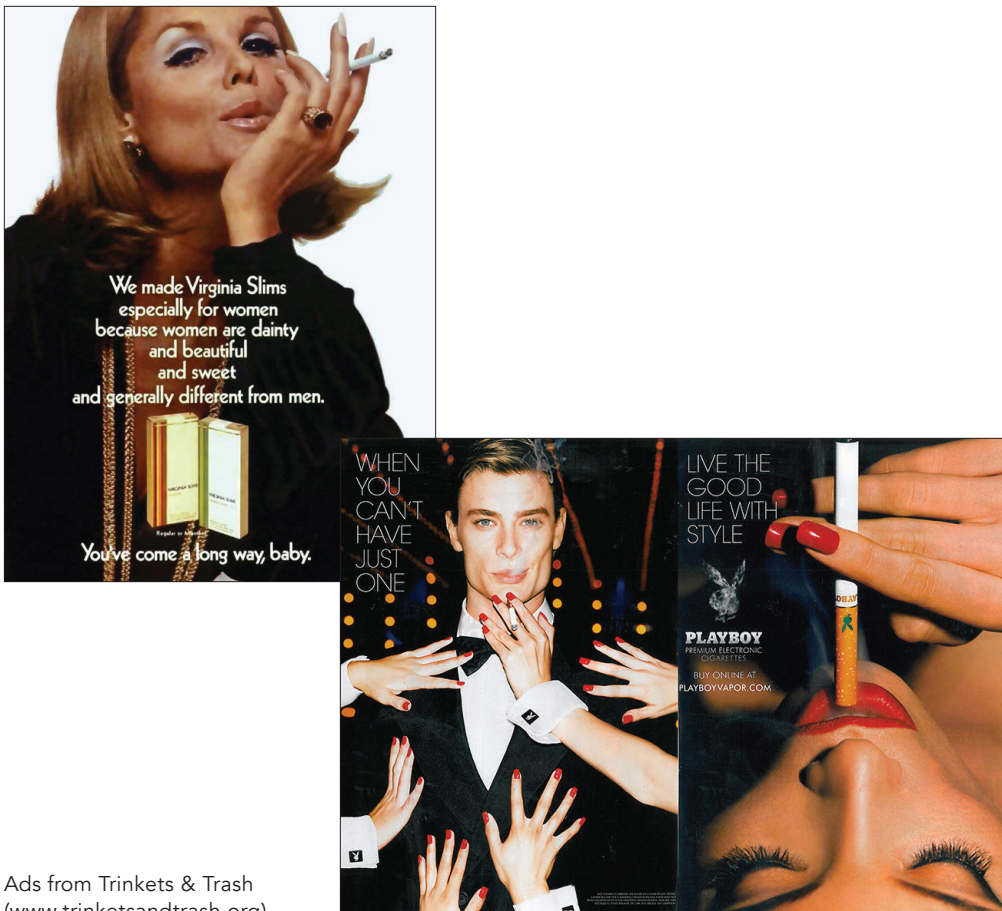
- From your observation, who smokes more at college parties? What gender differences have you observed?
- On your campus, is smoking more acceptable for men than for women?
- If smoking is considered less appropriate for women, why do so many college women smoke?
- Do you think this would differ by social group or social class? How?
- Beyond smoking, do you think there are different gendered expectations for behavior? Provide some examples.
- Do you feel that women your age are subject to greater surveillance than males?
- Ask a spokesperson from each group to summarize key issues which arose in the smaller group discussion.

What's Gender Got to Do with It?

EXPANDED ACTIVITY 2

Tobacco advertisements targeted at women have typically portrayed smoking as seductive, sexy, and attractive. Discuss some of the ads presented in this chapter, including the one for Camel No. 9. Do you think these messages are targeted at your age group? What messages are they sending about women and smoking?

As an out of class assignment, ask students to look at the Trinkets & Trash website (www.trinketsandtrash.org). Trinkets & Trash is a surveillance project and archive that monitors tobacco industry marketing in magazines, direct mail, e-mail, websites and other channels. Students can also look at the Stanford School of Medicine website (Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising, www.srita.stanford.edu), which is searchable by theme. Ask students to review recent ads on the website on a particular theme (such as women's smoking, women and e-cigarettes, etc.) and to select three ads which they have analyzed. Students should come prepared to class to discuss key themes and how they are presented in the ads. Their analysis can be turned in for a grade.



Ads from Trinkets & Trash
(www.trinketsandtrash.org)

Reconsidering Smoking as a Weight-Control Strategy

SUMMARY

One commonly hears that girls and women smoke to control their weight. Slenderness and smoking have been intentionally linked in the minds of the American public for decades, beginning with Lucky Strike ads in the 1920s, a time when women were encouraged to smoke as a way to control their desire for sweets. These early advertisements paved the way for the acceptability of women's smoking as prior to this time it was considered culturally inappropriate for women to smoke. A second wave of tobacco advertising in the 1960s and 70s—the Virginia Slims campaign—heralded the development of women's brands of cigarettes as well as an explicit linking of smoking with women's liberation and sophistication. Many of these women's brands featured super slim women as part of their advertised image.

This chapter draws on longitudinal data beginning with girls in middle school which followed them through high school into young adulthood. Through a series of interviews, I explore how girls talked about the relationship between dieting and smoking and how this changed over time. In this sample, only those girls who smoked at the highest levels (>10 per day) reported smoking as a strategy to control their weight. Most high school girls interviewed smoked only occasionally and were unable to smoke as an alternative to eating. Thus, this was not a widespread strategy and many girls made no connection at all between these behaviors. As we tracked these young women into young adulthood, we continued to find that few women consciously engaged in smoking as a weight control strategy. Among those who did do so, it was most commonly a sporadic practice not a long term sustained behavior. Of those who had tried the behavior, many found it ineffective.

Most importantly, young women who smoked did not view weight gain after quitting as a major reason to continue smoking. Rather, they recognized that even if they gained some weight initially, their motivation to quit was related to major lifestyle shifts, such as moving toward a healthier self. In fact, several women noted that characterizing a relapse to smoking because of weight gain was demeaning. From middle school to early adulthood, the primary reason for smoking among these women was not for weight control but for social facilitation among friends, as a means to manage stress in their lives, and because they were addicted to nicotine.

Reconsidering Smoking as a Weight-Control Strategy

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Historically, how has the advertised image contributed to the notion that women smoke to control their weight?
- Have you heard that smoking can help a person control their weight? If yes, where did you hear that?
- Based on your own observations, do you think women who smoke are thinner than non-smoking women? Describe your impressions and how this compares to the information presented in the chapter.
- Do you know women—friends or family members—who smoke to control their weight? Do you think this would be an effective weight control strategy? Why or why not?
- Do you know any men who smoke to control their weight?
- In this chapter, was smoking as a weight control strategy widely adopted by high school girls or young adults?

EXPANDED ACTIVITY

Ask students to look at the www.trinketsandtrash.org website or the Stanford School of Medicine website (Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising, www.srita.stanford.edu) to identify advertisements which portray cigarettes as a potential means to control one's weight. Both sites are searchable online archives of print advertisements, thematically organized and annotated. The Stanford site also has video clips of early TV advertisements.

As an in class or at home assignment, have students work individually (or in pairs) to peruse the website(s) and to identify 1-3 ads which capture the theme of women, smoking, and weight control. They may want to select ads from two different historical time periods to exemplify thematic changes over time. Students should provide an analysis of the selected ads, decoding them both in terms of the visual presentation and the tagline used. Students can show their selected advertisements in class, present their analysis, and hand in the assignment.

The Slippery Slope

SUMMARY

This chapter considers the transition from party smoking to more regular patterns of smoking among college students. Why do some young adults smoke occasionally and stop while others move on to higher or more regular levels of use? Findings from research on nicotine dependence have shown that susceptibility varies widely across individuals, with some people experiencing symptoms of nicotine dependence, such as withdrawal and cravings, much earlier than others. While it was previously believed that nicotine addiction developed slowly over a long period of time, more recent studies conclude that one does not need to smoke a certain number of cigarettes or smoke regularly for dependence to occur. To understand addiction, it is important to consider a multitude of factors including the role of social context, genetic susceptibility, and that cigarettes have been skillfully engineered by the tobacco industry to be efficient nicotine delivery devices.

Clinical studies have shown that women are more sensitive to the rewarding effects of nicotine than men and that women are more likely to report that smoking helps them reduce negative effect and manage stress. In lab studies, women turned to smoking more quickly as a resource when they experienced negative emotions.

Students who smoked described a variety of strategies they adopted to avoid moving to higher levels of use. These included bumming not buying, limiting the number of cigarettes one smoked a day, and setting specific times when one could smoke (like in the evening after dinner). Other students described how exercise (running, yoga) could serve as a harm reduction strategy by counterbalancing harmful effects of smoking. Other ways of balancing out one's potential harmful behaviors were to take vitamins, eat organic food, and smoke organic cigarettes.

Studies on cigarette brands and perceptions of risk among smokers continue to show that many smokers believe that some cigarette brands are less harmful than others. For example, it is widely believed that if a cigarette tastes harsh, it must be worse for health. In contrast, a "mild" or "light" cigarette is considered to be less harmful. It is worth noting that smoking light cigarettes is not less harmful and may in fact be more dangerous because people inhale them more deeply than regular cigarettes.

The Slippery Slope

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

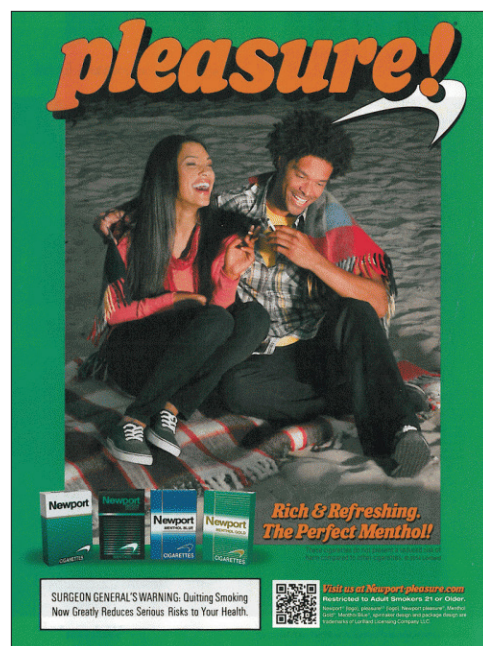
- What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of an addicted smoker?
- Do you or your friends claim that you are addicted to various behaviors or things (e.g., chocolate, shopping, etc.)? Does the commonality of “being addicted” discourse affect how we think about nicotine addiction?
- Do you think there is a difference between someone saying that their smoking is a habit and people who say it’s an addiction? Discuss your response.
- Why has the tobacco industry sought to distinguish between “truly addictive” drugs like heroin or cocaine and cigarettes?
- Although tobacco prevention programs have emphasized the physical risks of smoking, college students also spoke of the social risks of not smoking. What were these social risks? Have you or any of your friends experienced these? If yes, in what context?
- What strategies did college students adopt in an effort to avoid addiction?
- How has the tobacco industry attempted to create a sense of healthy smoking?
- Are additive-free cigarettes (like American Spirits) better for health or less addictive than conventional cigarettes? What have research studies found?

Tipping Points: Stress, Boredom, and Romance

SUMMARY

Beyond the social context of smoking at parties, cigarettes served multiple functions in students' lives. Smoking was a way to take a study break with friends during exam time, a way of celebrating the end of an exam, or a way to cope with secondhand stress which seemed to pervade the campus during midterms and finals. Smoking was used by some students as a form of self medication for the management of emotional and psychological states. Two other tipping points which impacted smoking trajectories were times of boredom when there was "nothing to do," and shifts in romantic relationships. The college years are marked by intense sociality and changes in smoking often involved a romantic partner. Breakups would sometimes lead students to stop or reduce their smoking or, for some, resulted in relapsing to smoking if they had stopped because their partner disliked the behavior.

What is important to note is that fluctuations in smoking were common among college students and as party smokers moved through their college years, some began to smoke in a greater number of contexts. Notably, research has shown that even among those who smoke at very low levels during their freshmen year, over half are still smoking at some levels as seniors. Events which triggered smoking at one point in time may remain an embodied memory leading to a continuation of smoking as a result of particular experiences.



Ads from Trinkets & Trash
(www.trinketsandtrash.org)

Tipping Points: Stress, Boredom, and Romance

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How did smoking change on the college campus during exam times? Have you observed this on your campus as well?
- Have you observed that many young people complain about feeling bored? In this chapter, some students are described as smoking when they were bored as it gave them something to do. Do you have friends who say they smoke to alleviate boredom?
- Have you observed that friends or people in your social network use smoking as a way of looking engaged and not bored?
- Was smoking ever an issue in a relationship that you have had? Have you heard your friends talk about this as a concern? How do you think it affects relationships?
- For some students, smoking served as an idiom of distress, signaling to others non-verbally that they were going through a difficult time in their life. Would you or have you commented to a friend who suddenly increased their smoking by a noticeable amount? What was the result of your comment?



Quit Talk

SUMMARY

This chapter explores college students' attitudes toward quitting. While most acknowledged that smoking was an unhealthy behavior, many felt that it was not unhealthy in the short term and that they could avoid the long term risks by quitting sometime in the future. In effect, they felt that there was plenty of time to quit after college graduation. Most students agreed that when they entered the "real world" (conceptualized as a time in the future when they would have a job or were "settled down"), it would no longer be acceptable to smoke. Some noted that when they approached future milestones (i.e., marriage or pregnancy) they would quit smoking for good. But college was a time when no one really cared what you did. So why bother to quit?

Students who smoked explained the difficulty and impracticality of quitting while still in college. Senior year was full of stressors, like not knowing what to do next with your life. For those who used cigarettes to manage stress, this did not seem like a good time to quit. Some rationalized their continued smoking by comparing tobacco to other drugs and concluding that tobacco was the lesser of evils when compared to other substances being used on campus.

Those students who had tried to quit emphasized that it was a personal decision and one needed willpower to succeed. They relied mostly on social support from friends and family to quit and expressed reluctance to use nicotine replacement therapy (like nicotine gum or a nicotine patch) for fear of becoming addicted to another substance.

Quit Talk

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Many of the seniors who smoked had little interest in quitting while they were still in college. What reasons did they give for this?
- When did they think would be an appropriate time for quitting? What is meant by the concept “hierarchy of risk”? How does it relate to smoking?
- If you had to develop a hierarchy of risky products that people use on your campus, what would it be? Where does tobacco fit into this?
- Thinking about friends or family members who currently smoke, have you ever advised them not to smoke or would you in the future? What do you perceive to be the social risks or benefits of doing so?
- If you wanted to help college smokers quit, what strategies do you think might work?

Looking Forward: Uncertain Trajectories

SUMMARY

Given the uncertainty of life trajectories for emerging adults (delayed marriage, inability to find suitable jobs, frequent moves, etc.), twenty-somethings may continue to smoke beyond their college years. Those who smoke socially and at lower levels have many fluctuations in their smoking habits. While quitting appeared to be a long term goal for many students, it did not seem very important in the short term.

New nicotine delivery devices, such as e-cigarettes, are being promoted as a healthier and safer alternative to cigarettes and an aid to quitting. However, the extent to which e-cigarettes are effective as a quitting aid is yet to be determined, as well as their potential long term effects on one's body. What is clear is that e-cigarettes are being heavily marketed to emerging adults by the major tobacco companies and they are gaining in popularity among this age cohort. Continued ethnographic research will be needed to track this trend and other emerging trends of smoking on campuses. Even at a time when many campuses in the U.S. are implementing a total ban on smoking on campus, the behavior remains popular.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- How is life after college graduation today different when compared to those who graduated from college ten years ago? In your opinion, what factors contribute to these differences? How might these differences affect the use of substances—like tobacco or alcohol use?
- The proliferation of e-cigarettes is a hotly contested issue among tobacco control advocates. What are some of the arguments for and against e-cigarettes among tobacco experts? Do you agree or disagree with them?
- Should e-cigarette use be allowed in public spaces like bars or on college campuses (even if traditional cigarette smoking has been banned)?
- What is a social norms approach to prevention? Have you seen examples of this on your campus? If so, for what? Do you think this prevention approach is successful?
- Many college campuses in the U.S. have banned smoking on campus. Is this type of policy appropriate or does it violate individual rights? Is a ban on smoking on campus necessary to protect citizen's health?

Looking Forward: Uncertain Trajectories

EXPANDED ACTIVITY 1

Have your students work in small groups to design a short questionnaire (about 6-7 questions) to be used with e-cigarette users on the college campus. As an out of class assignment, students can utilize their instrument to interview an e-cigarette user.

Possible questions include: How long has the person used e-cigarettes? Are they an exclusive user or do they also smoke other forms of tobacco? Do they have friends who use them? Do they think they are safer for one's health than traditional cigarettes? You can ask students to turn in their questions and a summary of their findings. Students should come prepared to discuss their findings as well as their experience conducting an interview.

EXPANDED ACTIVITY 2

Ask students to look at the www.trinketsandtrash.org website or the Stanford School of Medicine website (Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising, www.srita.stanford.edu) to identify advertisements for e-cigarettes. Both sites are searchable online archives of print advertisements, thematically organized and annotated. Ask students to work alone or in small groups to select 1-3 recent advertisements for e-cigarettes. Students should come prepared to discuss their selection in class or as an assignment to hand in. Some of the issues they should address include: 1) a critical analysis of the message; 2) a discussion of the assumed target audience and its relevance to them; and 3) a discussion of visual aspects of the advertisement.



Ads from Trinkets & Trash (www.trinketsandtrash.org)