Don't Box Me In: Black Youth and the Case for Differentiation In Tobacco Control

Malisa Young, Tamar Antin, Rachelle Annechino, Sharon Lipperman-Kreda • Prevention Research Center • Oakland, CA

Abstract

This poster presents an analysis of perceptions of tobacco denormalization strategies among young Black adults. Findings suggest that multiple and intersecting identities and experiences influence the ways in which people perceive and respond to tobacco denormalization efforts. While current tobacco denormalization strategies largely advance a "one size fits all" population-level approach, an understanding of the inherent heterogeneity within the Black population and a more differentiated approach may be more effective in achieving health equity.

Introduction

This analysis aims to understand how tobacco denormalization strategies are perceived by Black young adults in California, and to what extent those perceptions vary by demographics, attachment to or alienation from the larger community, and an identity of opposition.

Methodology

Participants
- African American young adults, 18-25 years old, in the San Francisco Bay Area
- 20 Smokers, 24 Non-Smokers
- 23 Female, 19 Male, 2 Gender Non-Conforming

Procedures
- Multi-method qualitative approach
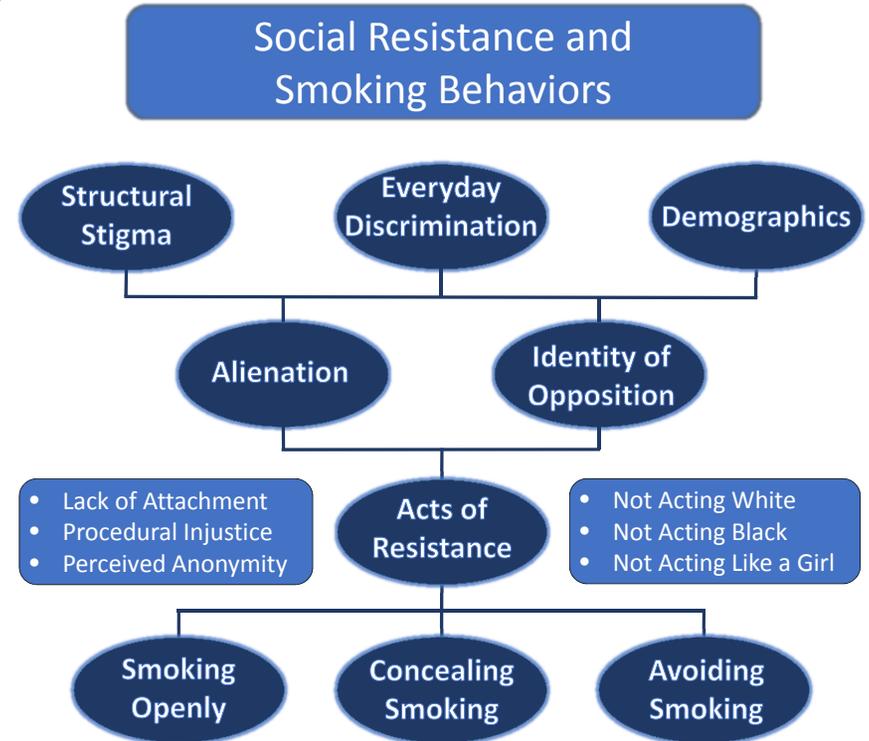- In-depth in-person ethnographic interviews

Findings

- Smokers actively resist dominant cultural norms by smoking openly.
- Smokers actively resist dominant cultural authority by concealing their smoking.
- Smokers actively seek out the perceived short-term benefits of smoking.
- Non-smokers actively resist stereotypes from dominant culture by avoiding behavior that is perceived to reinforce those stereotypes.
- Smokers often actively avoid smoking around children, out of concern for the children's health and as an act of role modeling.

Conclusions

- As social actors, smokers and non-smokers perceive and participate in multiple and overlapping systems of domination, responding to and resisting each of them differently.
- Future research should continue to investigate 1) the role that children play in mediating smoking as an act of social resistance, and 2) how systems of domination may contribute to health disparities by encouraging smoking behavior as an act of social resistance.

Acknowledgments

Social Resistance and Smoking Behaviors

Structural Stigma — Everyday Discrimination — Demographics → Alienation — Identity of Opposition → Acts of Resistance

- Lack of Attachment
- Procedural Injustice
- Perceived Anonymity

- Not Acting White
- Not Acting Black
- Not Acting Like a Girl

Acts of Resistance → Smoking Openly — Concealing Smoking — Avoiding Smoking

"That's a big advertising mogul that if I'm yelling at him, 'Stop trying to sell me cigarettes personally because I'm a black man,' that's not gonna happen. If I'm around a whole bunch of friends, all right, yeah, I'm a black guy. But I'm not gonna smoke menthol cigarettes." *-Jeff*

"Like, people use it to help them…It's like, 'Oh well, that's just something I can do. It's something to do when you go out, 'cause there's nothing else to do.' …Then there's also like, 'Oh well, if I'm stressed, it just helps me out.'" *-Karoline*

"I will not smoke around the kids. That's about it." *-Blessed*

"For the laws, I don't care about the laws. I'm just sayin'. I don't. C'mon, if I wanna smoke at the bus stop, I'm gonna smoke at the bus stop….If the cops aren't there, I'm smoking." *-Marzette*

"For me, that raises the issue of exclusivity and inclusivity… 'Cause everybody has a choice. But now I feel like someone's made that choice and they feel like they're being pushed away for it, which, for me, is just as bad as not giving them the choice in the first place." *-Gabby*