



**MEDIA
AWARENESS
NETWORK**

www.media-awareness.ca

Level: Grades 7-9

About the Author

Adapted from *Smoke-Free for Life*, a smoking prevention curriculum supplement from the Nova Scotia Department of Health, Drug Dependency and Tobacco Control Unit.

Lesson Plan

Gender and Tobacco

Overview

In this lesson, students explore gender-related influences on smoking. They discuss the numbers of male and female smokers in Canada and around the world, and the strategies used by tobacco companies to reach both men and women. In separate groups, male and female students explore and discuss the relationship between smoking, the tobacco industry, tobacco marketing, and their gender, by deconstructing and analyzing tobacco ads from magazines for men, for women, and for a general audience. Extension activities include examining a newspaper article that highlights some of the reasons young women smoke, and a research project on how the tobacco industry targets men and women in developing nations.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- an awareness of smoking as a global issue
- an understanding of the ways in which the tobacco industry targets men and women
- an awareness of the issues that relate to gender and tobacco marketing
- an understanding of the reasons why young men and young women smoke
- an understanding of the health risks associated with smoking

Preparation and Materials

- For ideas on how to conduct discussion groups on this topic, see *Guidelines for Peer-Led Discussion Groups*, on the sidebar.

Photocopy the student handouts:

- *Gender and Tobacco: Women and Girls*
- *Gender and Tobacco: Men and Boys*

Before class, have students collect magazines that contain cigarette advertising. (*Public libraries or school libraries will have back issues of a wide variety of magazines.*) If possible, include magazines that are specifically targeted to women and magazines that are specifically targeted to men. (*Note: men's magazines such as Maxim are very popular with teenaged boys, but are not appropriate for the classroom. If any students read these magazines at home, request that they remove or photocopy the tobacco ads, rather than bringing the magazine itself to class.*)

For the extension activity about Girls and Tobacco:

- Copy the newspaper article *Where There's Smoke, There Are Teenage Girls* – one for each student
- Copy the accompanying *Question Sheet* – one for each student

Procedure

Explain that in today's lesson, you will be looking at the relationship between gender and the tobacco industry.

Begin the class with the following questions. Ask students:

- Globally, what do you think are the percentages of female smokers and male smokers? (*Last available statistics from 1994 estimate that globally, 47 per cent of men and 12 per cent of women smoke.*)
- Why are there more male than female smokers? (*Although the gap between male and female smokers tends to be smaller in developed nations, there is tremendous disparity between the numbers of male and female smokers in developing nations – which represent a larger proportion of global statistics. In developing nations, cultural and socio-economic factors exert tremendous influence on female smoking habits.*)
- In Canada, what are the percentages of male and female smokers? (*25 per cent males, 21 per cent females.*)
- What are some contributing factors that influence smoking?
- Do you think that men and women smoke for the same reasons?

Put yourself into the position of a tobacco marketer.

- How might these statistics affect your marketing strategy?
- Where is the potential for most growth? (*The numbers are staggering. China alone has over 350 million smokers, which represents only a third of their total population. Of those 350 million smokers, only 3.8 per cent are female and 50 million are teens. This represents a tremendous untapped market.*)
- Would you use the same strategies to sell to women as you would for men?
- What strategies would be the same?
- What strategies would be different?

Activities

Small Group Discussion: 15 min

- Distribute *Gender and Tobacco: Women and Girls* to male students and *Gender and Tobacco: Men and Boys* to female students.

Once students have read the handouts, divide the class into four groups: two groups composed of girls and two groups composed of boys. Assign leaders and note-takers.

- Each group will present a brief summary of the main points of its handout.
- The girls' groups will answer the question, "What are the five most important reasons that teenage girls smoke?" and present their findings.
- The boys' groups will answer the same question, for teenage boys. (*Each group should try to come to a consensus before presenting its findings.*)

Advertising and Gender

Ask students to return to their groups.

- Two groups – one of boys and one of girls – will look at tobacco advertising in general-interest magazines (such as *Rolling Stone*, *Vibe*, *People*, etc.)
- The other two groups will look at gender-oriented magazines – the boys' groups will look at magazines that are read predominantly by men, and the girls' groups will look at magazines whose readership is predominantly female.

For each magazine, students will record:

- The name, date, and estimated target audience of the magazine.
- The number of advertisements for tobacco products.
- The types of tobacco products advertised (*such as regular cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, "light" or "slim" cigarettes*).

Referring to specific examples, note:

- The ways in which men and women are depicted in the ads. (*Look at body language, imagery and printed text.*)
- Messages about masculinity and femininity.
- Do the messages suit the overall tone of the magazine in which they appear?
- Is their tone consistent with other products in the magazine?
- Would the target audience respond to the messages of these tobacco ads? Why or why not?

Each group will present its findings to the class.

Extension Activities

Girls and Tobacco

- Distribute the newspaper article *Where There's Smoke, There Are Teenage Girls* and its accompanying *Question Sheet*.
- Students read the article and answer the questions, either individually or in pairs.
- Discuss the answers as a class.

Gender and Global Marketing

The global market represents tremendous opportunities for the tobacco industry.

- Have students conduct research and write a brief report on smoking and tobacco promotion in a developing nation of their choice. In their reports, students should include information about the numbers of male and female smokers, cultural and other influences, and the ways in which tobacco companies attempt to reach men and women.

Evaluation

- Group presentations and ad deconstruction.
- Gender and Global marketing reports.

Related Resources on the Media Awareness Network Web site

- Guidelines for Peer-Led Discussion Groups

Recommended Reading, Viewing, Surfing

- World Health Organization Report: Women and the Tobacco Epidemic
http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2001/WHO_NMH_TFI_01.1.pdf
- Tobacco: Global Trends
http://www.ash.org.uk/files/documents/ASH_562.pdf

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids Report:

- Deadly in Pink
http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/reports/women_new/

Gender and Tobacco: Women and Girls



When smoking first came into vogue, it was considered a man's activity, and unfeminine. Therefore it became a vehicle for women's rebellion and for asserting a new, more independent, self-image. Tobacco companies capitalized on this. It is said that Edward Bernays, a master of public relations who was hired by the tobacco industry, employed women to dress like feminists and march in the Easter parade of 1929 in New York City. These women were also paid to smoke and, when they attracted the attention of the press, to refer to their cigarettes as "torches of freedom." This was the beginning of an association between women smokers and freedom or liberation that has been cultivated and promoted by the tobacco industry.

Source: Jean Kilbourne and Rick Pollay, *Pack of Lies*, 1992.

For a long time, smoking was considered a male activity – but tobacco manufacturers quickly discovered the lucrative female market. Over the past few decades, aggressive advertising campaigns for women have equated smoking with emancipation, glamour, and slimness – and have successfully lured countless young women into the habit. In the U.S., cigarettes exclusively designed for women are now commonplace – with brands such as Virginia Slims, Eve, Now, More, Satin and Misty aggressively marketing to women. These campaigns have been very successful. In fact, in the six years following the introduction of Virginia Slims cigarettes, the number of American teenage girls who smoked more than doubled. (Virginia Slims is the world's number one brand of women's cigarettes.) Although these brands are not available in Canada, their empowering advertising campaigns can be found in the American magazines read by Canadian women.



The Canadian tobacco industry has also targeted the female market through corporate sponsorships. For example, the Matinee Ltd. Fashion Foundation sponsors fashion designers. As corporate sponsorship becomes more restrictive, the industry is finding more creative ways to promote its products. To escape advertising restrictions in Canada, RJR-Macdonald is using female celebrities to push its Vantage brand by "sponsoring" the "Vantage Women of Originality Awards" in Canadian magazines. The women who accept these awards (Jann Arden and Holly Cole, for example) receive a profile in a major women's magazine, and a donation of \$5,000 to a women's charity of their choice.

According to Physicians for a Smoke Free Canada, slightly more adult men smoke than women. However, among the 15-19 age group, more teenaged girls smoke than teenaged boys.

Canadians Who Smoke (2001)

Ages 15 – 19

Male
20%

Female
26%

Ages 20 - 24

Male
36%

Female
32%

Source: Tobacco in Canada, 2002.

American health officials have noted a similar trend in the U.S., where smoking among teenaged girls has also risen sharply. The Surgeon General's 2001 report on women and smoking found that nearly all women who smoke start as teenagers – and that 30 per cent of female high school smokers continue to smoke into adulthood.

The report clearly identifies tobacco advertising as a major influence on women who smoke. It concludes that:

- Women have been extensively targeted in tobacco marketing, both in North America and overseas.
- Tobacco marketing is dominated by themes of both social desirability and independence, which are conveyed through slim, attractive, athletic models.
- The dependence of the media on revenues from tobacco advertising oriented to women, coupled with tobacco-company sponsorship of women's fashions and of artistic, athletic and political events, has tended to stifle media coverage of the health consequences of smoking among women.

Know your target audience

When it comes to reaching girls and women, Big Tobacco has done its homework. In a report on how the tobacco industry targets women and girls, the U.S.-based organization Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids notes that:

"They [members of the tobacco industry] have conducted extensive market research on the attitudes of women and girls, to better understand how to target their products and their advertising. By focusing their research on how females view themselves, their aspirations and the social pressure they face, the cigarette

companies have developed some of the most aggressive and sophisticated marketing campaigns in history for reaching and influencing women and girls."

Women's magazines and tobacco messages

From August 1999 to August 2000, the American Council on Science and Health monitored twelve popular women's magazines for cigarette advertisements, smoking-related messages in articles and photographs, and the quality and nature of each magazine's health messages.

All of the magazines surveyed accepted cigarette advertisements and published many health-related articles, but the researchers found that less than one per cent of articles about women's health had an anti-smoking theme. For example, although articles addressed breast cancer, they failed to address the number-one cause of cancer death in women – lung disease.

Of the magazines surveyed – *Cosmopolitan, Elle, Family Circle, Glamour, Harpers Bazaar, Ladies' Home Journal, Mademoiselle, McCall's, Redbook, Self, Vogue, and Women's Day* – *Self* magazine illustrated the greatest commitment to women's health, by featuring the lowest number of tobacco ads and the highest number of anti-smoking messages. *Vogue* showed the least commitment to women's health, with no anti-smoking articles – and over half the issues included pictures of models and famous people smoking.

Why do women smoke?

According to Health Canada, most women smoke for one or more of these reasons:

- to relax and take a break
- to be sociable
- to deal with stress and depression
- to fight feelings of helplessness, and to deal with anger and frustration
- to avoid gaining weight
- as a sign of control over their lives
- because they are addicted

The women most likely to be at risk are usually:

- unemployed or low-income
- less-educated
- native
- Francophone
- in blue collar jobs

Health hazards to women from smoking

- Smoking is the leading killer of women in Canada. Every 35 minutes, a Canadian woman dies as a result of smoking.
- Diseases shared with men include: emphysema, chronic bronchitis, peripheral vascular disease, heart disease, stroke, cancers of the mouth, larynx, and bladder.

- Risks associated with reproduction: decreased fertility; higher risk of miscarriage, lower birth weights, stillbirth, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.
- Reduced estrogen levels, leading to menstrual disorders, early menopause and osteoporosis.
- Women smokers who use contraceptive pills are 10 to 20 times more likely to suffer from heart disease and stroke. Generally, women who smoke are five times more likely to be killed by a stroke.
- Women who smoke get more coughs, colds and minor illnesses.
- Cancer of the cervix often strikes younger women.
- Lung cancer kills more women than breast cancer.
- Middle-aged women who smoke are likely to be as wrinkled as nonsmokers who are 15-20 years older.

Asian women – the new frontier

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that only 7 per cent of women in developing countries smoke (compared with 48 per cent of men). This represents a tremendous untapped market for tobacco manufacturers.

Western cigarette manufacturers have always had a distinct advantage in developing countries, where foreign brands are regarded as important status symbols. They've had no difficulty encouraging men to smoke their brands, but in recent years, tobacco companies have turned their attention to girls and women. Women in Asian countries – especially China – are particularly appealing. According to the WHO, women in China (where only 2 per cent of women smoke) represent the largest potential market for tobacco companies. The WHO report "Women and the Tobacco Epidemic" includes this quote from a Philip Morris Vice President:

No discussion of the tobacco industry in the year 2000 would be complete without addressing what may be the most important feature on the landscape, the [female] China market. In every respect, China confounds the imagination.

To attract more women smokers, Chinese tobacco marketers have joined the Virginia Slims bandwagon and created cigarette brands for women. Chahua and Yuren (which means "pretty woman") are slim, elegant cigarettes that are promoted as low in tar, and milder than men's brands.

Tobacco advertisements geared to Asian women feature themes that would be familiar to North American women: independence, stress relief and weight control.

Sources:

- "The ad-Vantage of Celebrities." *Filter Tips*. Spring 1999. Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada. Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey. Health Canada. 2000.
- "Tobacco in Canada." Spring 2002. Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada
- "Getting Smoke-Free: An Information Kit for Community Organizations Working with Women." Health Canada, 2001.
- The Surgeon General's Report on Women and Smoking. March 27, 2001.
- "Tobacco Industry Targeting of Women and Girls." Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Spring 2001.
- Jonathan Samet and Soon-Young Yoon (eds.), "Women and the Tobacco Epidemic: Challenges for the 21st Century." The World Health Organization, 2001.

Gender and Tobacco: Men and Boys



In recent years, anti-tobacco lobbyists and health experts have focused on the issues surrounding women and smoking. This has largely been in response to legitimate concerns about the increasing numbers of young women who are taking up the smoking habit. However, this doesn't mean that we can ignore the fact that smoking has always been – and continues to be – a male activity.

In Canada, over a million 15-24-year-olds smoke, with teen smokers aged 15-19 the age group most open to quitting and teen smokers aged 20-24 the age group most resistant to quitting.

The breakdown by gender of young people who smoke looks like this:

Ages 15 – 19

Male
20%

Female
26%

Ages 20 - 24

Male
36%

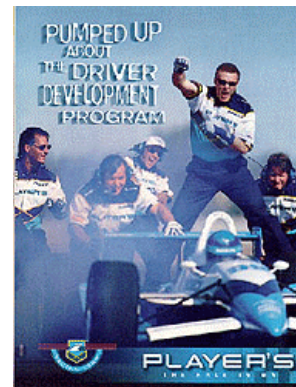
Female
32%

Source: Tobacco in Canada, 2002.

Although more girls than boys aged 15-19 smoke, the boys are more likely to be heavy smokers – making it harder for them to quit the habit later on. Boys are also more likely to consume other tobacco products such as cigars and chewing tobacco.

"It is hypothesized that very young starter smokers choose Export A because it provides them with an instant badge of masculinity, appeals to their rebellious nature and establishes their position amongst their peers."

Export Family Strategy Document, 22 March 1982, RJR-Macdonald Inc.



Young males represent a particularly lucrative target market for advertisers, who play on their insecurities about breaking away from childhood, forging their own identities, and becoming "men." Tobacco ads geared to boys associate smoking with positive messages about masculinity based on success, confidence, sophistication, coolness, athletic ability, sexual attractiveness, independence, rebellion, adventure, risk-taking and self-fulfillment. These messages are reinforced not only by magazine ads, but also by sponsorship of racing and extreme sporting events, and by portrayals of tobacco use in the movies, television shows and music videos enjoyed by male teens.

"We're not handing out money for nothing. We have gone into this very thoroughly, and the entire publicity is built around motor racing – seen as a fast, exciting, trendy sport for the young."

Gordon Watson, British American Tobacco, 1984.

The combination of sports and tobacco is a powerful way for tobacco marketers to reach young males. Sports sponsorship represents a "win-win" situation where tobacco companies get extensive media coverage for both the events and their sports heroes. Boys in particular are more likely than girls to remember advertisements for tobacco-sponsored sporting events, and studies have found that the favourite cigarette brands of teens are the same brands that dominate such events.

Another popular strategy for reaching young males is to appeal to their need for independence.

"The industry has long known that the most pressing psychological need of adolescents is their need for independence, autonomy, self-reliance – as they seek an adult identity independent of the family cocoon. The brands most successful with teenagers are those that offer adult imagery rich with connotations of independence, freedom from authority, and self-reliance. The Marlboro Man epitomizes this, as he is totally and autonomously free – usually alone and interacting with no one, and always with no parents, no older brothers, no foreman, no bullies, indeed no one at all whose authority must be respected. There is not even a sheriff in Marlboro Country."

Dr. Richard Pollay, "Export A Ads are Extremely Excellent, Eh?"
Filter Tips Magazine, Autumn, 1998

Reasons for smoking: boys vs. girls

For the most part, teenage boys and teenage girls smoke for the same reasons. Low self-esteem, risk-taking, lower socioeconomic status and smoking by parents, siblings and friends – all these can influence a young person's decision to smoke. However, research has shown that adolescent boys are more likely to use smoking as a way to relieve stress or to "get along" in life, whereas adolescent girls appear to smoke more for social reasons.

Office on Smoking and Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Girls are also more likely than boys to use smoking as a way of controlling appetite and weight – but recent studies have found that some adolescent males are using tobacco for the same reasons. Researchers have discovered that boys aged 9-14

who think they are overweight are 65 per cent more likely to think about or try smoking than their peers. Boys who work out every day in order to lose weight are twice as likely to experiment with tobacco.

Marcus, A. (1999) "Body Image Tied to Smoking in Kids."

Why do men smoke?

- For stimulation – to relieve boredom
- For pleasure
- To be sociable
- To relax
- As a sign of independence
- For weight control
- Because they are addicted

Statistically, males who smoke are most likely to be:

- Young adults
- Individuals who are unemployed or have lower incomes
- Individuals who are less educated
- Aboriginal
- Francophones
- Individuals in blue-collar jobs

Health hazards to men from smoking

- Smoking caused an estimated 29,229 male deaths in Canada in 1996. (Thirty-one per cent of these deaths were from lung cancer, and 22 per cent were caused by heart disease.)

In addition to coronary heart disease and lung cancer, male smokers also risk:

- Breathing problems, such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis
- Cancer of the throat, mouth, larynx, esophagus, pancreas, kidney or bladder
- Impotence and diminished sexual functions

Sources:

Health Canada, "Living Smoke Free: Educational Resources and Research" 2001.

"Formula One and Tobacco: The world's most dangerous sport?" Evidence to the FIA regarding the link between tobacco advertising/sponsorship and increased smoking. Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). 1998.
http://old.ash.org.uk/html/advspo/html/formula_one.html

World Health Organization: "Tobacco and the Rights of the Child."

Quotes: World Health Organization: "Tobacco Explained"
<http://tobacco.who.int>

Where There's Smoke, There Are Teenage Girls

Kira Vermond

Financial Post (National Post Online)

You see them at the mall laughing with their friends, standing outside the local movie theatre in cold weather and on the sidewalks facing away from their schools. You see them as young as 12 and 13. You see teenage girls smoking.

Despite all the warnings that smoking-related disease is the number-one killer of women, and that lung cancer has now surpassed breast cancer as the leading cause of cancer death in women, young women continue to light up.

Although overall smoking rates have declined over the last 25 years, according to the latest Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey conducted by Statistics Canada, in the 15-17 age group, more teenage girls smoked than teenage boys in 2000 – 25 per cent compared to 19 per cent.

The trend of young women smoking early is particularly troubling – simply because the earlier people start smoking, the earlier they become addicted and develop disease related to the habit. Dr. Elinor Wilson, chief science officer for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, says the problem is a global one.

"We're starting to see that, as the world becomes more globalized and westernized, women's smoking rates are going up around the world," she says. "There seems to be a link with equating equality with the freedom to smoke."

Dr. Greaves says women say smoking contributes to their identity, their image, how they manage their emotions and how they feel about taking risks. "They depend on cigarettes as other people depend on a friend or partner," she says.

Weight control and body image is another contentious issue. Tobacco industry critics say cigarette-makers have pushed the ambiguous relationship between slim, healthy women and cigarettes by sponsoring sporting and arts events and sending advertorial magazines directly to young women's homes. "The images portrayed in the marketing about women and smoking are of health, vitality, energy, freedom and freshness," says Dr. Greaves. "All those images are exactly the opposite of what smoking does."

Canada is considered a leader in developing hard-hitting advertising restrictions and regulations aimed at the tobacco industry, but that does not mean the messages and images do not seep through the cracks says Dr. Wilson.

"The tobacco industry is very smart and it has a lot of money. Every time you close a door in one place, it finds a window somewhere else," she says.

One of the key ways that young Canadian women encounter tobacco advertising is through popular U.S. magazines. U.S. tobacco companies are no longer permitted to advertise in publications such as *Seventeen* or *YM*, but they can in magazines for older audiences. Younger women are still core readers for magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, that are not affected by the ban.

Smoking images also travel north from Hollywood, where nine out of ten movies are shipped for English Canadian audiences. A Health Canada program called Mixed Messages stated that the largest increase in images of smoking was depicted in movies with a PG rating – movies created for children and teenagers.

“Our government has made great strides in terms of restricting all that stuff, but it’s still there. In some ways, it’s on a more difficult level to control because those images are less blatant,” Ms. Greaves says.

Faced with the avalanche of pro-smoking images out there, parents can feel helpless when trying to figure out how to keep their children on the straight and narrow. Dr. Wilson suggests that parents talk about their views on smoking, and be adamant about keeping a smoke-free house – and above all, quit smoking themselves. Especially when dealing with their pre-teen and teenage girls, it is important that parents treat them equally and respectfully, making sure that the rules they set for the boys are the same for the girls.

“Lecturing doesn’t help. Punishment doesn’t help,” she cautions. “It’s about closeness and communication – and knowing what your kids are going through and facing.”

5. What role do the media play in influencing young people to smoke?

6. According to this article, how are Canadian restrictions on tobacco advertising compromised? List two examples.