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ANTISMOKING AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The antismoking movement and the smokers rights movement are examined and their relationship to the environmental movement is explored. It is suggested that the two movements concerned with smoking are not significantly different and both involve a close ideological union with the environmental movement. Data are presented which suggest that smokers and nonsmokers are emerging as distinct social groups and that their attitudes toward environmental controls differ. Further, evidence is presented which indicates that support for strong environmental programs by former smokers may become stronger in the near future.

Demographics related to smoking or not smoking, the physiological consequences of smoking, the history of smoking, and smokers and nonsmokers as members of distinct social movements have been the foci of a growing number of studies with an interest in smoking behavior [1-5]. Of particular interest to social scientists has been the developing battle between smokers and nonsmokers and the antismoking crusade as an incipient social movement. Markle and Troyer, taking a deviant behavior perspective, present smokers and nonsmokers as members of two status groups in conflict over the "collective conferral of legitimacy and consequent prestige." [4, p. 22] A similar position is taken in an earlier paper by Nuehring and Markle [6].

The model used by Markle and Troyer is based on Gusfield's study of the

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American temperance movement [7]. Taken in historical perspective, anti-cigarette laws up to the early 1970's are seen as "assimilative." That is, the smoker is seen as admitting deviance and the "reformer" looks on the deviant with pity and sympathy [4, p. 69]. As to the future, Troyer and Markle specualte that the antismoking movement will adopt "coercive" tactics such as the use of political, economic and legal resources to stigmatize smokers.

Shor, Shor and Williams characterize the antismoking movement as having two separate and potentially conflicting components: nonsmokers' rights and antismokers [5]. Shor et al., point out that, in the short run, the nonsmokers' rights movement has objectives which are incompatible with the general antismoking movement. Particularly, they point to the fact that the nonsmokers' rights movement is *not* necessarily antismoking; their focus is only the protection of the rights of nonsmokers. Shor et al., ground their analysis, not in Gusfield's temperance literature, but see parallels with the struggle in the United States by blacks for civil rights. The nonsmokers' rights movement is seen as working not to stigmatize smokers, but as working for "their rights against oppressive conditions. . . against the institutionalized social support systems of smoking." [5, p. 141]

Previous studies are useful in putting the conflict between smokers and nonsmokers in historical perspective and in drawing out what may be an important split within the nonsmokers movement, but they do not provide us with insights into smokers' attitudes. We know who smokes and who does not and why some smoke and others do not. What is called for now are studies which examine the attitudes of smokers and nonsmokers toward particular issues. In addition, while both Markle and Troyer and Shor et al., speculate as to where the nonsmokers' and smokers' rights movements may be headed (that is, toward "coercive tactics"), they provide no data on smokers and nonsmokers to support their conjecture.

One possible source of insight into smoking behavior and the direction of the nonsmokers' and smokers' rights movement is the environmental movement. Previous research on smoking behavior has overlooked the possible links between nonsmoking and support for environmental programs. While Markle and Troyer look to the temperance movement for insight and Shor et al., the civil rights movement, the contemporary environmental movement may provide the key to future smoker and nonsmoker relations.

The decade of the 1970's, the so-called "environmental decade" [8], chronologically parallels the maturation of the conflict between smokers and nonsmokers [4, 5]. The decade began with the signing of the National Environmental Policy Act and the celebration of the first Earth Day. Between 1970 and 1980 over a dozen major pieces of environmental legislation were passed by Congress. During the decade the environmental movement matured as a social movement and the ethic of environmentalism became firmly rooted in the American way of life [9-14].

Recently, mainline environmental groups such as the Sierra Club, Environmental Action, the Izzac Walton League, and the Audubon Society have worked to broaden the agenda of the movement and have begun to reach out to individuals and groups which traditionally have not been among the supporters of environmentalism [15-18]. Occupational health, toxics control and clean air are three environmental issues on which some unions and their predominantly working and middle class members have joined with the traditionally upper middle and upper class environmentalists to push for implementation of strong environmental programs [8, 18].

As the environmental movement has widened its agenda and appeal, "power" has supplemented "participation" strategies [9-12, 19]. The targets of environmentalism have remained corporate America and government, but coercion is increasingly supplementing education and efforts to induce voluntary change. These same trends are visible in the nonsmokers' and smokers' rights movements. The focus of each is increasingly on the tobacco industry and government (that is, taxes, subsidies, medical research, and legislation regulating smoking). Rehabilitation and to a lesser extent education has become the domain of private enterprise [20]. These similarities between the nonsmokers and environmental movements are suggestive of a possible coalescing of movements. In order to examine this prospect we focus on:

1. the attitudes of smokers and nonsmokers toward support for strong environmental programs; and
2. attitudes and behavior of smokers and nonsmokers regarding smoking and smokers.

METHOD

Sample

The sample includes 642 home telephone subscribers selected from the universe of the most current telephone directories of a SMSA in a small southern state. Specific telephone numbers were drawn by systematic sampling with a random start. By a specific selection procedure, interviewers maintained a representative mixture of respondents with respect to the age and sex of those present in each household at the time of the call. Interviews were conducted with respondents eighteen years of age and over.

Calls were made between 5:00 and 9:00 p.m. weekdays and 2:00 and 9:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday during the period March 19th through 28th, 1982.

Dependent Variables

Support for strong environmental programs was measured by a five item scale designed to solicit attitudes regarding pollution control [13]. Respondents were

asked to agree or disagree with each of the items. On items 1, 2, and 5, a value of 1 was assigned to disagree, and agree and undecided were scored at 0. Agreement on items 3 and 4 was scored 1, and disagreement and undecided scored 0.

Independent Variables

Five measures of attitudes and behavior regarding smoking were employed. Smoker status was measured by asking respondents if they were regular, occasional, former or never smokers. Regular and occasional smokers were combined into a smokers category, and former smokers and never smokers were combined into a nonsmokers category. Level of interaction with smokers was measured by combining two questions regarding contact with smokers. Respondents were asked if any members of their household smoked and if any of their close friend smoked. Stereotyping of smokers was measured by asking respondents to indicate their level of agreement to five stereotypical statements regarding smokers [21]. Level of agreement was indicated in a five point Likert-type scale.

Preferences regarding restrictions on smoking behavior were measured by asking respondents to indicate their attitude regarding smoking behavior in seven different public places [21]. Choices of smoking behavior included entirely nonsmoking; smoking and nonsmoking sections; or no restrictions on smoking behavior. Scores on the seven questions were combined to form a

Table 1. Distribution of Responses to the Five Item Strong Environmental Programs Scale[a]

Items	*Agree*[b]	*Disagree*	*No Answer*
1. Pollution laws have gotten too strict in recent years.	28.0	70.4	1.6
2. We should think of jobs first and pollution second.	47.8	50.5	1.7
3. Anti-pollution laws should be enforced more strongly.	74.0	24.5	1.6
4. If an industry cannot control its pollution, it should be shut down.	65.4	32.9	1.7
5. Pollution control measures have created unfair burdens on industry.	44.2	54.0	1.7

[a]The authors wish to thank Professor Riley E. Dunlap, Washington State University, for sharing with us questionnaires he and colleagues have used previously. The Support for Environmental Programs Scale is adapted from those developed by Dunlap.

[b]On items 1 , 2, and 5, undecided is assigned to AGREE, and on items 3 and 4, undecided is assigned to DISAGREE.

restrictions-on-smoking scale. Finally, former smokers were asked the number of years it had been since they stopped smoking.

FINDINGS

Table 2 shows the relationship among the variables. As predicted, those who were regular or occasional smokers were more likely to score lower on support for strong environmental programs than were former or never smokers (-.08).

The relationship between stereotyping of smokers and support for strong environmental programs was also found to be as predicted (.10). The greater the support for strong environmental programs, the more smokers are seen in stereotypical terms. A third relationship, interaction with smokers and support for the environmental programs, supported our hypotheses. The closer the interaction with smokers, the lower the support for strong environmental programs (-.09).

While the relationship between restrictions on smoking behavior and support for the environmental movement was in the direction predicted, it was extremely low and not significant. It seems that those respondents who scored high on support for environmental programs did not transfer those feelings to restrictions on the conduct of smokers.

Finally, there was an inverse relationship between the number of years since former smokers stopped smoking and support for the environmental movement (-.29). This relationship was not significantly changed even when the effects of age were removed (-.23). This finding indicates that, regardless of age, the more recently the individual has stopped smoking, the stronger his support for the environmental movement. It should be noted that most of the former smokers

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of Selected Variables

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*
1. Smoker status[a]	1.00	-.49	.36	-.34	*c*	-.10	-.08
2. Stereotyping of smokers		1.00	-.29	.38	.15	.06[b]	.10
3. Interaction with smokers			1.00	-.24	-.23	-.12	-.09
4. Restrictions on smoking				1.00	.09[b]	.08	.04[b]
5. Years since stopped smoking					1.00	.44	-.29
6. Age						1.00	-.29
7. Support for the strong environmental programs							1.00

[a]Smoker status: smokers and occasional smokers were coded 1; former and never smokers were coded 0.

[b]Not significant at .05.

[c]Not possible to compute.

had stopped within the last few years. The mean number of years since former smokers stopped was 9.98 with 81 percent stopping within the last fifteen years and 20 percent within the last year.

DISCUSSION

The most striking result of this study is the evident polarization between smokers and nonsmokers. Not only do smokers and nonsmokers differ as to smoking behavior, but their attitudes toward smoking and smokers is markedly different. Nonsmokers are more likely than smokers to stereotype smokers and are more likely than smokers to interact with nonsmokers. In addition, although not statistically significant, we found nonsmokers more likely than smokers to support restrictions on smoking. Each group–smokers and nonsmokers–see themselves as an "in group" and their opposite as an "out group." This strong dichotomy is also evident when smokers and nonsmokers are compared as to support for strong environmental programs. Nonsmokers, those who stereotype smokers, those with little interaction with smokers, the young and those who have recently stopped smoking are more likely than their opposites to support strong environmental programs.

These results suggest several things. First, as pointed out above, smokers and nonsmokers, as groups, are estranged. They do not interact, nonsmokers see smokers stereotypically and their positions differ on smoking and environmental issues. Second, based on our results concerning interaction and stereotyping, this estrangement is likely to grow. There are numerous studies which show that segregation–lack of interaction–is not conducive to reconciliation [22, 23]. Third, the distinction between the antismoking and nonsmokers' rights movement made by Shor et al., fails to recognize that the end product of both movements is identical [5]. Both will result in further segregation and estrangement. Fourth, we found nonsmokers were more likely than smokers to support strong environmental programs. This suggests that the environmental movement as a mature social movement, is likely to find additional supporters in the ranks of the nonsmokers. Likewise, the antismoking movement can find allies among environmentalists. What we see is the prospect for a coalescing of the two movements. Fifth, we found evidence suggesting that support for strong environmental programs by former smokers may become stronger in the near future. The more recent the "born again" nonsmoker's conversion, the stronger his or her support for strong environmental programs. The U.S. government estimates that nearly 30,000,000 Americans quit smoking between 1965 and 1975 [4, p. 620]. Our results suggest that these individuals are prime prospects for supporters of environmental causes.

Finally, we feel our results are congruent with a life style and attitude being adopted by many nonsmoking Americans. That is, the environment is perceived in a more holistic sense combining both a macro (corporate pollution and

regulatory politics) and micro (personal physical health) conception of environmentalism. This same holistic perspective is increasingly influential within leisure and medical science and among the general public. The result is that where, or if, one smokes a cigarette is seen as both an environmental *and* a medical issue. Our results suggest this overlapping between a medical and environmental perspective is due in part to the environmental movement's normative impact on American society. As environmental awareness and support have taken hold over the past decade, the social support system for smoking has declined [5].

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