

Soc 1010-002- homework3



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

My research tried to find out whether smoking was correlated with gender and with perceptions of health, and if so, what kind of health. My results were not terribly surprising, but still deserve detailed comment.

25% of those who responded smoked. Of that group, 52% were men and 48% were women. Of those who did not smoke, 54% were women and 46% were men. Given the small sample size, this could easily have been experimental error. However, some of the answers I got in the health sections pointed to people wanting to quit because of concern over their health for family-making and child-rearing. There were certainly gender variations in terms of how women and men justified their smoking, as we will return to.

Of those who smoked, 60% smoked 1-5 times a day (mostly as they identified in the “ how” section during lunch breaks), 28% smoked 5-10 times a day, 8% smoked 10-20 times a day and 4% 20+.

Without exception, every single person who did not smoke did not think it was good for their health. But of the 8 people who did smoke, about six said it was good for their health. Only one said that they thought the “ whole cancer thing” was exaggerated. The rest offered various rationalizations for why it made sense in their life.

One of the women said that they used it to control the stress from work and a new baby. They said that they knew smoking would lower their life expectancy in general but they wanted to be able to manage the stress of their job without taking it out on their child, their coworkers or their boyfriend.

Two of the men also offered stress control as a reason, saying that during a smoke break, they were able to calm down, focus and prepare for the rest of

the day. For these men, smoke and coffee were inextricably linked: Both mentioned a smoke, coffee and lunch break as their daily work ritual.

One of the women said that they had been told that they looked sexy when they smoked and it stuck with them. For them, the health benefits of being more attractive were worth the cost of the smoking. “ Its like Botox”, she said.

One man suggested that it was a sort of good living health benefit that he experienced. Smoking was part of enjoying good food and wine. They found that smoking would help them cap off their day.

Finally, one man used smoking because he often had nausea and irritable bowel and found that cigarettes helped his symptoms. He only smoked four times a day, to stave off nausea and let him eat. He found that the cost of the cigarettes, which he already noticed in decreased lung capacity, were worth the benefit of being able to eat and being able to be around people without being humiliated.

Obviously, there needs to be a larger sample size: 30 people is just not large enough to make any real conclusions. The most promising data came from the qualitative question at the end. In addition, I was able only to target students. Getting older smokers who might have older perceptions of the safety of smoking would be essential, as would some broader cross-cultural variation.

I also would redesign the study to try to get a feel for how people view smoking. Maybe some smokers view smoking in general as a filthy habit. Such questions could include, “ Do you think its rude to smoke in public spaces?” or “ Do you like the smell that cigarettes leave behind?”

Nonetheless, my data point to differences in terms of why men and women embrace smoking, which is itself interesting.