

Conformity and smoking research paper samples

[Health & Medicine](#), [Addiction](#)



Smoking has been a consistently rising issue in the United States since tobacco plantations sprung up in the south, before the Civil War. Since the popularity of cigarettes, cigars, and chewing tobacco began to catch on, the citizens of America have experienced a wide array of side effects because of the substance. The various forms in which tobacco and nicotine are consumed cause cancer of the mouth, esophagus, and lungs, which can cause death or disfiguration. Gum disease is also possible, as well as heart disease and emphysema. Most popularly, however, is the addiction that nearly everybody consuming nicotine and tobacco experience. The afflictions are the reasons I chose to learn more about this topic. Cancer and emphysema are serious. It is a well-known fact that these products cause addiction and could lead to an early death; I wanted to know what could lead a person to simply not caring about the consequences.

The social problem is simple, yet vast. It is estimated that 600, 000 teens try their first cigarette each year and, according to Zeena Harakeh, nearly 75% of those children will become addicted even though they know the risks . More than 300, 000 teens each year graduate with a nicotine problem, leaving school potentially to die an early death because of cigarettes. However, why? Why do they open this Pandora's Box knowing it may kill them? Giving the social structure of high school, and the defining age teens are at during the time in which they try smoking, the signs point to conformity .

Teens, according, " Young Adult Smoking in Peer Groups: An Experimental Observational Study," often have a difficult time fitting in, and strive to do whatever it takes to continue feeling comfortable within their peer group .

Many times, if one individual takes control and defines a signature item of clothing, a gesture, or an action as “cool” the rest of the group will follow for fear of being left behind or cast out of the group. It will not matter if the individual’s personal beliefs or morals object to the action or gesture, they will do it simply to not be left out or made fun of. This sociological concept is known as conformity, according to, “The Impact of Active and Passive Peer Influence on Young Adult Smoking: An Experimental Study”. Peers will often force others to conform, whether they know it or not, which is known as active and passive conformity. Verbalizing conformity, or calling one another out, and simply deeming something cool and unspokenly specifying classmates follow their lead is what separates the two concepts.

Society at large does not help the teen fight against conformity. Not only do teens wish to fit in with others they see, they wish to fit in with all of society. Smoking campaigns inconspicuously target many of their ads at society, but particularly younger crowds that include teenagers. The point of these advertisements is to make teens think everybody is smoking, but also that everybody who is smoking looks cool, has many friends, and is always having a good time. By the nature of conformity, teens, and anybody else watching these advertisements, believe these insinuations and want to be a part of the crowd that smokes. The warnings of carcinogens mixed with the nicotine and tobacco in cigarettes or the risk of losing all of your teeth to gum disease are quickly forgotten because conformity drives youths and young adults to be one with a crowd they have never even met. The unnamed crowd is the danger with conformity; oftentimes herd mentality, or conformity, is so powerful a mere insinuation that one will be left behind for

these imaginary cool people is enough to ignite a desire to do something even if it is dangerous .

Unfortunately, few members of society do anything to curb herd mentality because they inadvertently participate in it. From older siblings to grandparents, to teachers, to politicians, it appears somebody from every walk of life is smoking. These individuals eventually fall into this conformist view about smoking until they are addicted. Once they are addicted, it is no longer about the conformity, and only about replenishing the body's system with nicotine. Because the nicotine is harmful, and the habit is typically started due to a conformist attitude in many areas of society, it can be considered a social problem.

In sum, smoking is primarily a social problem due to conformity. Teens and young adults are the most susceptible because they strive to fit in, and smoking is often shown as an activity that is cool and will give a person many friends. Advertisements warn smokers that smoking can cause cancer, gum disease, liver disease, and several other health problems, but the desire to fit in becomes too great and eventually individuals succumb to the urge to fit in with their peers. Eventually they become addicted to the nicotine in the cigarettes and fitting in is no longer an issue. The root of the problem is placed on conformity because it causes the smoker to override their normal risk assessment; the new smoker only desires to fit in. As a result, they may experience emphysema, cancer of the jaw, or even an early death.

Personally, I would suggest that we begin using the power of conformity against smoking by showing that it is " cool" not to smoke. If advertisements began showing the only way to fit in was to avoid smoking, it could cut down

on future adult addictions. I was appalled at how many teens per year begin smoking, and even more disgusted by the number of teens that become addicted, all in the name of conformity. We must teach young adults to think for themselves, and follow their own morals even if goes against how society or major tobacco companies, wants them to conform. Being cool should be about being you.

References

Harakeh, Zeena and Wilma A. M. Vollebergh. " The impact of active and passive peer influence on young adult smoking: An experimental study." Drug and Alcohol Dependence (2012): 220-223. Article.

Harakeh, Zeena. " Young Adult Smoking in Peer Groups: An Experimental Observational Study." Nicotine and Tobacco Research (2012): 656-661. Article.