



Year One Focus Group Summary And Codebook

NALGBTCC Tobacco Program

8/07/02

2st Ed.

Year One Focus Groups

The NALGBTCC Tobacco Program conducted 23 focus groups (151 people) during year one. Focus groups were primarily for smokers and segregated by gender or race/ethnicity, other focus groups were conducted that asked people their thoughts about tobacco related policies. On average, focus group participants were predominately white gay men; also Los Angeles, CA had the greatest number of focus group participation. Over a third of focus group participants live in Los Angeles.

Race

White 49.3%

Black 15.1%

Hispanic 19.1%

Asian/Pacific Islander/Native American 16.4% **Relationship Status**

Significant Other 35.8%

0-6mn 18.5%

7mn-1yr 17.9%

1-3yr 13.9%

Sexual Identity

Gay Male 52%

Lesbian 36.2%

Bisexual (M or F) 5.9%

City

Los Angeles 30.5%

Atlanta 12.6%

Garden Grove 11.3%

San Antonio 10.6%

Denver 9.9%

Minneapolis 8.6%

Baton Rouge 7.3%

Salt Lake 6.6%

Omaha 2.6%

Atlanta

Men's Focus group

Six men participated within the focus group, over half the group were 40 years of age or older and African-American. Approximately two-thirds have some college experience, and half make approximately \$35,000 or more a year. Two men identified themselves as bisexual, two others identified themselves as gay, and the last two did not identify their sexuality.

Why people smoke?

Participants reported a strong association between smoking and going to clubs; however, the reason appears to be related to alcohol use. Alcohol and smoking are a popular combination. Coffee was also mentioned as another substance used when smoking. Smoking has a dual relationship with other substances. It's used in conjunction with other substances like alcohol or caffeine, but it is used by others to aid their recovery from other substances.

I smoke after drinking or at the club.

What do you think are the things that contribute to your smoking or using tobacco?
Alcohol. It helps relax my mood.

When I'm really drinking or drugging I have to have a cigarette. I couldn't drink or drug without a cigarette. I smoke more...unintelligible...so I have to have it. And even after sex I have to have one. It seems like it calms, it levels you off or something.

Can anyone name any positive aspects of smoking? Anything positive about smoking?
As for me, being in recovery it keeps me from picking up. Right now I'm not strong enough to let go of the tobacco. And it really helps me. So that's positive.

I could say when I do smoke I do think about I'd rather smoke a cigarette than go back to smoking some crack.

Stress is another factor that seems to influence people's desire to smoke.

I'm not an every day smoker. I only smoke when my partner gets on my nerves. Sometimes when I'm thinking too much. Too much hard thinking. I want one after I eat but I don't do it like that. Only when I get upset. My nerves, my bad nerves or whatever. That's about it.

Smoking and cigarettes also have an important social role.

Anyone else? Anything positive?

It does make it easy to pick someone up at a bar or fuck someone.
Cigarettes?

Well, I'll be honest. I'm standing at a...and then I have issues with men asking for stuff but a lot of guys ask me for a cigarette. Start a conversation. Find out what's going on. It's like an ice

breaker.

Smoking's negative aspects

Participants were able to identify many negative things to say about the affects of smoking. They tended to vary from physical illnesses to one's appearance.

What are some of the bad things about smoking?

Bronchitis, emphysema, eczema, lung cancer.

Nicotine addiction.

Bad breath and brown teeth

Short of wind.

Reduces your sense of smell.

The smell stays in your clothes. Goes in your clothes.

Many people stated that their initial use was the result of influences by social others (both implicit and explicit). Even when one person began by stating that he was solely responsible for their initial use, the influence of others was still apparent.

Think back to the first time you used tobacco and what were the things that led you to try it?

No, I just wanted to do it. And what led me to start; somebody showed me how to do it. But we were smoking Salem's at school. The friend that showed me how to inhale the stuff. Then one day in went in the bathroom and I smoked a Cool and I inhaled it and it made me sick. But as sick as it made me, the walls were moving around and stuff, busted out in this big sweat. If I had any sense I wouldn't have smoked anymore. But that was it. I want to be like the big guys. None of my peers smoked except this one friend. I thought it was cool. It made you grown up.

For others parents and the media were important in their decision to use cigarettes.

I did it because my mother and father were doing it and then I seen my brother a couple years older than me doing it and I thought it was all right. I didn't like it. But when I got older I started doing it anyway.

I did it because...first I started doing it in college. But the first time I did it I didn't really inhale and I used to watch these old movies. So I got a silver box, a silver cigarette box like back in the day I was so into that. I got a lighter. A Zippo lighter and I started smoking Benson and Hedges, Ultra Light 100's. It's like not even really smoking. The first time I really inhaled I got the giggles. I don't know why I got the giggles from the cigarettes but that was it. I started smoking for a while. And then I stopped.

My father used to let me light his cigarettes when I was about ten. I think that got rid of that need to be cool or be grown up. But that was an experience in my life so I guess I...smoke after that.

My mother used to always ask us to light her one if she was out on the patio or something. She would always say go light me a cigarette. And of course when you light one you try it.

During the discussion of who one can talk to about quitting, participants gave many answers

ranging from friends to family members. However, when asked who they would avoid, other smokers were almost the unanimous response.

Is there anyone you would avoid if you tried to quit smoking?

People that smoke.

Chain smokers.

People that smoke and don't buy cigarettes

When asked who smoked more, men vs. women, and gay men vs. lesbians, men and gay men were stated to be the one's who smoked more, however, the issue of race was touched and brought out this discussion.

I think women definitely smoke less than men. Black men in particular. I see a lot of black men smoking and I don't know where that's from.

No opinion.

Anyone else?

I actually have a question to lead up to that. Just out of curiosity, because you are questioning that and I don't know either. What do you think, why do black men smoke?

Stress.

Stress.

Peer pressure.

Peer pressure from other black men?

No, just situations like they got families to feed and they wife piss them off or whatever issues.

I think it's just a fad, too.

I really think it's the media. I notice a lot more. I notice a lot of rappers talk about smoking.

Hip-hop is really big now. A lot of hip-hop artists talk about smoking. It seems like a lot of videos and movies I'm seeing, at least black movies, I'm seeing black men smoking more.

I meant to say that it's just cool. That's why they do it. It's portrayed as being cool.

I see a lot of people still do it because they picked it up from other people who wanted to be cool because that person looked cool. And they've been doing it so long that they can't put it down now, too.

So you think black people smoke more than other nationalities or races?

To a degree, I think they do.

The race/ethnic differences came up again during the discussion of brands.

What brands of cigarettes do you think are most popular with gay men?

Newport.

Marlboro.

Marlboro Lights and Newport's.

Anybody else?

O.K. This is another race thing but I went to school with a lot white people. But I've pretty much always life with black people. And I noticed that black people smoke menthol cigarettes and white people smoke like, Marlboro Reds. Has anybody ever noticed that? I don't know if that black people decided that was cool and you were acting white if you smoked it. But if it's something more insidious because I know that menthol cigarettes damage your throat more so they're probably marketed, I don't know. I think there's some sort of plot against black people. Make us smoke the worst possible cigarettes. I know a lot of white people they smoke cloves which are so much better for you than menthol cigarettes.

More black people smoke menthol than doesn't.

Does anyone else have any idea of why that would be the case?

I think marketing has a lot to do with it. Just like you see the big billboards that say, "Alive with Pleasure" and you see two black people or a black guy and a girl bicycling and they got "Alive with Pleasure." So it's marketing and retail strategy, I think.

Or they see their parents smoke the cigarettes and then allow people to have it from them.

That's where I got it from. My mom smokes Salem Menthol and I smoke menthol.

What kind of image do you think is associated with Marlboro's versus Menthols?

Personally, I've never seen a Marlboro ad in Vibe magazine.

When the issue of quitting was brought up, a participant stated a reluctance to quit.

I'm being honest. Like right now, I have some health concerns that would make it; I would be healthier if I stopped. I've cut down a little bit. I don't smoke as much as I used to because I'm not that addicted. But I think if I got cancer or if I had emphysema or eczema, that's a skin thing. Something breath related. Like you said, upper respiratory infections. I'd quit. But I'll be honest with you. I would probably still smoke a cigarette every now and then. Even if I was given a diagnosis of you have six months to live, unless it choke me and I couldn't catch my breath, I think I would still smoke. I think it'll be something. Lord, I'm just talking now, I'm not planning on getting cancer. That's probably what it would take for me to quit. Or just a change. Starting to think about how much money I could have.

The individual felt the need to have a major life event that is connected to smoking before they will consider quitting. The analogy of sexual behavior was used.

I think a lot of people have a lot of unprotected sex or they aren't as safe as they could be.

That's why the HIV rate is so high. Especially in our community. There's a lot of people that are... Like we know what you need to do to not have HIV or venereal disease but obviously people get them. And a lot of people don't start having safe sex until after they've got gonorrhea or something.

I think, too, there are a lot of times people who are addicted to things, like they have addictive behaviors. It's why I'm so neurotic about not getting addicted to something. Cause I just know early that I have addictive behavior but at the same time it's like...If I know that and I've already given up this and this and this, it's like damn I have to have something. I really do think that everybody has an addiction. I won't judge people and I don't try to say that one addiction is worse than another but whether it is smoking or sex or eating or shopping or whatever it is. Everybody is addicted to something. And to me, sex is a lot cheaper than shopping or smoking. You know what I mean. I go out to eat a lot, too. That's another thing that I do too much.

I used to go these NA meetings and everybody there smokes. I can't even sweat you because if you've given up way worse things and you're smoking, go ahead and smoke if that helps you out.

This individual is fatalistic about his chances of quitting. The safer sex connection is interesting in that it also involves having people change their behavior in order to improve their health (or to keep from dying). However, people will have to decide that the benefit from not smoking is greater than the benefit from smoking.

This is interesting because, I'm sorry if I'm getting off subject. The reason I'm late was because I was doing some conversing on the telephone with somebody who had very similar position but

towards alcohol. He knows all the things bad for him. He knows all the reasons he should not do it. But he said I'm not going to, I enjoy it, it gives me pleasure. It's a similar kind of... Until he and you get to that point where you say no, although I may be getting momentary pleasure from it, in the long-term, overall it's not doing me any good. To love yourself enough that you're...

Women's Focus group

Only two women attended the focus group, both were in their early 20's, white, and earn approximately \$30-35,000. The two women said that they were only social smokers. They only smoked when they drank, and/or with friends.

This is just a series of questions and if you have any questions about the questions, speak up.

What are the occasions that you use tobacco?

If I'm around my friends, unfortunately. I quit smoking for about a month after graduation and now all my friends are back in town and I find myself smoking again. Just if I go out to a bar.

A social...?

I'm just basically a social smoker.

What about you?

I'm a social smoker if I've had a lot to drink. I don't smoke like every time I go out or anything.

They also stated some positive aspects of smoking. It has its uses for the participants, especially in maintaining a certain image and stress relief.

So what do you think some of the positive aspects of smoking are?

I like to smoke. I like the act of it.

I think people look sexy sometimes when they're smoking.

Anything else?

It's something to do. I'm a very fidgeting person. I think for some people it might be a way to distress or to calm down. Comfort.

Do either of you smoke in stressful situations or...?

I guess that's other thing. I found it impossible to not smoke at school. Partly because I was always with my friends but also because that's the best way to write a paper. You know, just turn your fan on high and just smoke all night long and write a paper. Which is basically what I did to get through school.

And negative aspects.

So what do you think the negative aspects are?

Lung cancer.

There's that. I usually if I smoke too much I get sick. My glands swell up and I have to quit because I just get sick. I see sometimes people smoke when they have colds or whatever. That makes me ill because I just can't imagine. That feeling when you have a really sore throat and you're all clogged up. My friends, they are the ones that are really are smokers. When I see people smoking like that, it just makes me sick. It's gross.

Bad breath, ugly teeth, nasty smelling clothes. Those are my negatives.

It's curious that while the appearance of smokers is seen as positive, there are also negative aspects in relation to people's appearance.

Family members were found to influence participants initial smoking experiences. It later became a way to present an image to others.

So think about the first time you used tobacco, what led you to use it?

My dad gave me a cigarette. I think I was ten or something like that. But I think he was just trying to gross me out but it didn't work. Honestly, I can't remember like a first time. Like in junior high and late elementary school it's kind of like that bad thing to do every once in a while. I have no idea.

I remember my very first time very clearly because my cousin who's younger than me was like the smoker and so she came to some ninth or tenth grade party with me when she was visiting and I felt really bad that I had never smoked before and my little cousin was. So, that was the first time I ever smoked. But it was because I felt like I wasn't cool or something.

Which kind of leads into my next question of how were you feeling at that time?

I felt stupid.

You felt stupid because you weren't...?

Because my cousin was hipper than I was. And they're all like, can I get a cigarette and she was like, yeah, sure.

How about you?

Me, I was just one of those bad kids anyway. I think I contributed to that. I went to a really conservative school all my life and I was like that girl.

When talking about quitting, the discussion of how some friends could hinder recovery. However, one's mother was discussed as being someone she can talk to about quitting.

Theoretically, if I were to quit smoking, they would have to have some part in it because, like I said, I just can't not do it when they're around. ...

Because they smoke and...

Yeah and they always offer it. If they were to be at least like no, no kind of thing even though I am. That might be better.

I've never really smoked more than three cigarettes a week. I've never really had something that I needed to stop as far as smoking goes.

When you started again after the month that you quit, what prompted you to start again?

Just being around my friends again.

Back into the social setting?

Like usually in the summers I can quit if I'm doing my own thing. School, I always smoke during school. I've never not smoked during school. I've gone, like for instance, Christmas break, the five weeks we get, I usually won't smoke too much over that period of time. But as soon as school starts again, its part of the ritual, I guess. Like writing papers and doing whatever.

Their perception of smoking rates is that lesbians smoke more than heterosexual women and gay men. However, participants noted that they lacked exposure to multiple settings and so could not give an unbiased account.

What is your perception of lesbians smoking compared to straight women?

I didn't really start hanging out with lesbians until a year ago but I had an Agnes Scott. If you ever want to find any lesbians you go to the smoking.

What's it called, Pit Stop or something?

The Butt Stop. You go to the Butt Stop because you know they'll all be there. But also if you want to find, like some girls who are straight but they are like best friends with the lesbians on campus or whatever, so they would always be there, too. Other girls who didn't want to have anything to do with the lesbians were nowhere near there.

So who do you think smokes more, gays or lesbians?

Lesbians.

Lesbians.

Why?

I'm really biased though because I went to Agnes Scott so I spent four years hanging out with far more lesbians than I ever did in the...

I'm from South Florida, Miami, Ft. Lauderdale area and I know this is so superficial or whatever, not that like whatever, but it seems like gay bars, gay clubs whatever, which are mostly gay male down in South Florida, seemed a lot cleaner, a lot fresher. Not everyone is smoking there. In Atlanta, I don't usually go to gay male clubs. I did back then. Up here, it seems like lesbian bars are smoky.

As for cigarette brand, camels were mentioned as being popular in their group.

Well, there's...I'll just jump right in here. This is something that we did as kind of a joke or whatever. It is like a thing. Lesbians smoke. We have a little smoking bench at school where all the smokers congregate. That became like a joke. That was like the lesbian bench anyway. You know what I mean, because the straight people who do smoke are probably not that straight anyway. According to our pole. The other thing was that straight girls smoke Marlboro Lights and anyone who's anyone gay smokes Camels. I don't know if it was marketing or what it is at school. Because it's not...it's like lesbian bars. It's Camels, Camel, Camel everywhere in all the gay stuff. Except I think gay guys smoke Marlboro Lights, too, but that's probably...it's trends, noticing trends, that's all.

They also discussed how Camel directly marketed to the college students on their campus. The statement at the end about how they are photographing ID's is disturbing in two ways. One where Camel is likely to use that information to track and directly market to that individual, the other is concern over identity theft which was never discussed.

Have either of you ever tried to quit smoking?

I always do. I go on and off. I've gone long periods of time without smoking. I actually went about a month. I still consider myself, I don't smoke. I don't have any on me and I won't smoke any today. If we go to the bar tonight, I will.

Or she came to my car at work yesterday to unlock my car to get out cigarettes that she knew were in my car.

Which had been there for about a month and a half because I don't know.

Which happened to be free cigarettes that we got from the Camel person.

So tell me a little bit about that. You walk in the door and whatever...

Well, there's this guy.

There's a male passing out cigarettes at a lesbian bar?

Track Sides not a lesbian bar.

Track Sides not really a lesbian bar but it's basically right on the campus. It's just like a street...across the street from the main campus. That's where we go a lot. The first cigarettes we got were from a friend of mine, a girl. I think she's been zoned for buckhead which she's not real thrilled about.

So you walk in and they say...?

They don't really say. Everyone just knows who he is. All he has to do is stand there and look cool and people will flock to him. He's got a big bag and they always pick really, really tiny people. They get this lithe look. There's something about the person that obviously they're there for some other reason other than to drink. And because they go to the same bar, like he's there all the time. Everyone knows who he is. **You just go to him and give him your I.D. and he has a little box and he photographs your I.D. and you get cigarettes.** I don't know, he's always there.

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Men's Group

Six men participated within the focus group held within the Lambda Center in Baton Rouge. Four participants were in their early twenties and two were in their forties. Three men earned less than \$15,000 a year and three earned more than \$30,000 a year. Four men only reported having a high school diploma or GED, one four years of college, and one with a graduate degree.

When asked why people smoke the word addiction is used to describe the craving, however, outside forces were mentioned as influencing the amount smoked.

I agree with Clark. No outside influences making me smoke I just, or contributing to it I just...I am addicted, I guess.

Well, no outside influences make me smoke, I smoke more because of outside influences but I'm...addiction thing. I am a real hateful bitch when I don't have my cigarette.

When asked about the rate of smoking in the gay community, someone responded that a wide variety of substance use problems exist within the community.

I have a perspective on that that may add something to it and that is that one of the things that's bothered me a little bit about the community since I officially came out, is that, and part of this may be jaded by the fact that I never really hung around the kinds of crowds prior to coming out that would have had lots of addicts or other kinds of behaviors involved. But it just seems to me since I have been out, that a lot of the community is involved in drugs or has trouble with alcoholism or are smokers, sucked up on medications, that kind of thing. It just seems to me that it pervades our community. But I don't know how real that perspective is in comparison to the general population, because like I said I wasn't around a lot of people who would have been when I wasn't out. So I can't really compare that.

When asked about this, social acceptance and the lack of social contexts outside the gay bar was discussed.

What do you think are the factors then that may cause all those different?

I don't know if it has anything to do with, it could be a number of things. Could be the general lack of acceptance of the lifestyle. It could be something to do with just the fact that a lot of us are probably under a lot more stress than our heterosexual counterparts. I don't know, it's hard to say.

Some of it has to do with when you first come out and you are looking for places to go and people to meet. On the surface when you first start looking where can you go, well, the most obvious answer is and easiest answer is the bar.

Almost the only answer, which is sad.

Right. Well I think that's getting better and there are other options but you have to dig a little deeper to find them. Like going to the center and stuff like this. It's not as obvious as the Icon.

What's Icon?

Gay bar.

So if your then going to the bar every weekend because your gay, and you want to meet people, and your around alcohol and your drinking more probably and your hanging around also other people who go to the bar quite a bit. I think if you go to the bar and you go to the bar to drink, you're probably more likely to smoke. So you're just around it more so you want to be accepted and you want to sort of, do what everyone else is doing you know so you start smoking. So I think that contributes to it.

However, the differences in social networks were also discussed as a bias towards one's perception of the problem.

I disagree with that. I mean obviously statistics and numbers that were thrown at us say that drug abuse and alcohol abuse are more common in the gay community. But I can say that before a year ago, that I started, well, I got involved with a gay activist organization Kandis about the Landis center I got to meet a lot of gay people. Even though I was out to all my friends, I hung out almost strictly with straight people or heterosexuals and I have to say there as a lot more drug abuse and alcohol abuse and smoking among the heterosexual straight crowds that the people I have met in the last year that are gay. A lot more

Really?

Well that could be.

If you're hanging out with people who are activists and they are probably more responsible and more concerned about themselves and so are probably going to be less addictive.

Well most of my friends didn't consider themselves activists. The environmental activist or human rights activist or anything in that category they were almost all of them identified as some form of activist or another, too, and they were still heavy into drug abuse and alcohol abuse. Part of my early experience too, was with a specific group that I actually had a relationship in for a year. A large part of those people were HIV positive or were involved in other dependency kinds of issues like the alcoholism or the drug abuse or other kinds of things as well. So it might have been an overrated kind of group that I was exposed to, which was a large part of my first year out.

Discussion arose over the specific issues that gay men face.

Do you think it might also have something to do with the fact that we face so many issues that are specific to our culture? I wouldn't say specific, but tend to impact our culture a whole lot more than general society. Like HIV, AIDS, whatever.

Comparing the smoking between lesbians and gay men brought up mixed responses.

What about lesbians? Do you think that lesbians smoke more or less than gay men?

I don't know.

That's a hard one for us. In our group, men are certainly less.

Yeah. Certainly less.

But as a whole...

I don't know. I don't know enough to say.

Actually no. I would say no.

Of the ones I know virtually none of them.

Smoking has numerous positive effects upon the lives of the participants. Its stimulate effects as well as the rituals attached to it were mentioned.

It gives you something to do when you're bored.

Yeah, it gives you something.

It's calming when you're uncomfortable.

Anything else?

It has a...like in a conversation, it's just like. It's just that it gives you something to do.

Well, for me, I noticed that if it's been a few hours and I've been...well, if I go to a meeting or something like that it's sort of a couple hours and it's intense and I think a lot. Or something that's emotional for a couple of hours and I haven't had a cigarette. Then my heads kind of cloudy and I feel kind of tired and if I smoke a cigarette it's almost like this veil gets lifted over my eyes. It's like I can think clear and relax.

Denver, Colorado

Men's group

Five men participated within the focus group. Three people were under 30, one near 40, and the last near 60 years of age. Of the five men, only one did not earn more than \$30,000 a year. All have at least a few years of college, and all were white.

Generally, driving, bars and work were mentioned as contexts where smoking is likely to occur. Stress was also an issue that influenced people's smoking.

OK, so just to make it easier, say smoking, not tobacco use. So like when are the occasions, you said going out. You mean to

Bars or clubs

And what are the other occasions when you smoke during the week?

At work when there is a slow period, I will usually just step outside with a cigarette, but usually its just once a night, if it is stressful, twice a night.

Driving...I can't drive without a cigarette. It drives me nuts all night to get out of my car and go into Target I will have already had a cigarette 10 minutes ago and I light another one. It never fails, like if I am going around running errands I smoke so much.

What do you think it means to you?

Something to do. No, I don't smoke because I am bored, I smoke because I am addicted, but It does keep me busy and give me something to do. You know work *is slow*, I have a cigarette. It's slow here, I have a cigarette. When I am in my car, I have a cigarette.

Smoking appears to play a role as a nervous habit, something for people to do when not doing anything constructive.

The telephone is another big one for me. When I am on the phone talking to somebody, being social, no matter what setting it's in, I have to have a cigarette in my hand to give me something constructive to do with my hands.

Tell us a little bit more about you're going out experiences. Describe the scene. You ever see Golden Girls when Sophia says "picture it, Sicily 1928", so do Denver 2001.

Well picture it Denver 2001, for example I usually go to JR's or the Grand and well relaxed atmosphere and just kind of standing around and sit around with a drink in one hand, whether it be an alcoholic or ginger ale or something, and it's just something to do with your other hand rather than just stick your hand in your pocket. For me that's the way I feel. Also, like on Saturday nights I go out to Trek's a lot and Trek's is a little bit more of a different atmosphere, its more of a dance club and a little more phonetic. Usually I am a little more wired up, I have had a Red Bull or something and just kind of in between songs I will have a cigarette just out on the patio.

Related to the above, stress was mentioned as influencing people's smoking behavior.

Usually, with friends. A lot of times for me it really gets to be a focus if I am looking for my friends. Like if we get separated somewhere in the club, I am walking around looking for them, I get a little aggravated and annoyed because people are bumping into me or whatever, and a lot

of time just having a cigarette it's like alright, I can deal with it now. Sort of a bit of a stress relief.

In addition, there is a social aspect to this as well.

Smoking is an awesome way to meet people

Agreed. Smokers are more social. If you ask any restaurant servers, smokers are better tippers, there are easier going, they don't bitch at you when things go wrong. Generally smoker's, like if you are in smoking at a restaurant it's the best thing, you know you make more money, you have a better time, people don't rag on you as much. You can ask anyone, who serves at least.

Yeah. I was at my work station and there was a lady that was sitting by me and I heard her get off of a really really bad call, somebody was just ripping her a new one, and I just had a stupid person on the phone and we both took a break around the same time. We were walking down stairs and I was just going to walk around the building and she drag out a cigarette and she said "oh, I so needed that after this last call" and it was just kind of like "wow, alright I want one." And I had smoked a couple of cigarettes before. You know when you are a kid you know you do the whole thing, smoke a cigarette. You know and so I had known what it was like but at the time I really used as a stress release and it was a real opportunity to set down and sort of talk through the stress with somebody. Actually to this day, when I light up I think "ohhh." It is sort of like a treat. It really is. I still, I really kind of associate lighting up with kind of a stress release.

I have always thought that a cigarette tasted better and I had a better time with it when there are other people there with me smoking versus when I would smoke by myself. It seemed when I am by myself ?????? or whatever or taking a break from work it seems a little harsher. I particularly don't like the buzz really that I get. It makes me feel a little icky. It seems to be smoother, a little more enjoyable when there are other people there enjoying their cigarettes while I enjoy mine.

Packing also has important social relevance to the smoker.

It packs the tobacco. Basically what it does is it keeps the bottom ?top. So when you pack it down you like...If you put salt in a shaker and you tap the shaker on the table, the salt level goes down, right? Because it's getting more crushed together more, so and I don't know why, I do it because it's easier to light. You don't lose a single shred of tobacco. Laughing. If you don't pack it. I mean it would sort of all fall out. You don't want to miss any. You pack the top to the bottom. If you pack it where it's tighter at the tip, it's easier to light. If you pack it the other way, then it smokes a little smoother. And it also takes a little bit longer for it to burn out, because packing it towards the butt actually it burns it slower because it's so packed so you can actually take longer and smoke it.

Besides the functional aspect, is there another part to it?

The sound. Because when you are doing this it is sort of a cool thing to do.

So how is it a cool thing to do?

It just seems like everyone else is doing it. Sort of almost a verbal announcement. I've got cigarettes and I am getting ready to enjoy myself. In almost a lude sort of way, like I can't think of a really better reference, like coming in masturbation.

The same with chewing tobacco.

Well, it's like when I chew. Back in my teenage years. The can, when you have it in your pocket, gets all loose and everything and you actually have to physically pack it so it all goes to one side so you can get a good dip out of it. Just to hear that sound was one, intriguing to everyone, two, everybody knew you were getting ready to socialize or you were getting ready to do something. It was almost a verbal queue for everyone to gather around you because you knew that you were at that point that you wanted other people around you. It never failed. I could sit in my truck when I was in high school and pack my can and hear that thump thump thump and by the time I had my three fingers in the can and putting it in my mouth, there were four people around me and we were all talking and socializing what we were going to do, what the plan for the weekend was, what was the football game going to be like tonight? Those types of things. It was a verbal queue for other people around me to say "hey listen, I am getting ready to...I want to socialize with you." And it never failed. I would even just pull out my can and just tap it a couple of times and stick it back in my pocket so I would have people to talk to. So, it's kind of the same thing with cigarettes. You know, it's that verbal queue for people around you, saying this is someone who is wanting to socialize. This is someone who wants to you know be with other people at this time because I am smoking. It was a very social aspect.

The smoking initiation itself had a social aspect.

Sixth grade peer pressure. Because a lot of the kids in my neighborhood had older brothers and sisters. So it was peer pressure because I was looking for a group to be with because I was typically not the accepted ones, especially in elementary and junior high, so I was looking for a social group to be involved in and

When you say peer pressure, like in what way? Like how?

Everybody that hung out in this group either smoked cigarettes or smoked pot were experimenting with drugs and things like that, dressed all in black and wore...it was a rough crowd.

Is this the group you were accepted by or not accepted by?

This was the group that I was more or less accepted by. Because I had tried to fit into other groups and didn't find my niche and when I got involved in this group of people it was almost like they accepted me for who I was, what I was and allowed me to experiment with being...experiment with myself and find out who I really was. And that's what my acceptance was and that's how I got into smoking because everybody in the group smoked, so it was like someone handed me a cigarette

In regards to initiation, it could sometimes be the result of a single crucial source of influence.

I didn't start until I was 18 thereabouts. I had lived, my parents never smoked, my grandparents never smoked, and I didn't even have smoking friends up until probably around 16. Erin, she smoked all the time. I would rag on her, smells nasty and makes your teeth yellow and I didn't want to hang out at her house because I hated that smell. And then one night, I hadn't drunk, I hadn't done anything new, I was like "Erin, give me a cigarette." She said "what?" I was like "give me a cigarette." So she hands it to me and I smoked it and I didn't cough and I didn't gag

and I was French inhaling by the time I was half way through it and then I was smoking and that cigarette turned into 2 turned into 4 turned into 8.....

So why do you think that you tried it?

I didn't want to fit in. You know it wasn't because I wanted to be cool. It wasn't because I felt unaccepted. Actually after I started smoking I was less accepted than before. You know people were like "you started smoking? "Eewww." So you know it really didn't accomplish any major goal. You know, I mean maybe to get closer to Erin, who is still my best friend. Unintelligible. There wasn't a good reason. There wasn't any motivation to start. It was more like a whim. I was like "huh, I'll try that." And I can't think of one specific cause.

The issue of addiction was also mentioned as a contributor to tobacco use.

OK, moving on. So what do you think contribute...you guys mentioned some of the things that got us started or that motivating factors to smoke were stress, socializing, you know for social reasons like what do you think are the things that contribute to your smoking now?

Habit. Addiction. ????? and alcohol with wanting another beer. It's the same thing. You are addicted. You feel like you need it and if you don't get it you don't function. You can't work right. You shake or you scream at people or you just go off on these bouts of crime. You need it. You know it's hard to quit once you are addicted. It's not like I see an ashtray and immediately think that I need a cigarette. It's not like that. It's because I am addicted. I need that cigarette. I need the nicotine. It's sort of almost the perfect ???? setup. You get through a period of time and then you reward yourself with a cigarette. Unintelligible.

Its use with alcohol is seen as purposeful.

Probably the biggest positive I smoke a lot more when I drink. More than anything and partially it's because like scientifically somehow smoking kind of balances out the drinking and you also think that your blood vessels are constricting and dilating the other I guess. So it kind of balances out and it just, like when I am drinking it makes me calm down and make me not feel as drunk as I very well may be. If I am driving, it makes me concentrate a lot better. It gives me almost like an outlet where if I concentrate on my cigarette you know. It makes me feel better. It helps me to just generally concentrate better.

Its function as a stimulant and a social aid are seen as positive aspects.

It's a break. It's a break from everything. Especially like work. If things are going very sporadic at work and you just need time to gather your brain, what better way to say "excuse me I am going to go have a cigarette I'll be back in 5 minutes or I'll be back in 15 minutes." Because especially if you work in an office where there are a lot of smokers or there are non-smokers that have worked with smokers, they understand that is kind of a put together time. Things may be a little stressful, whatever, but it's a break from what you're doing to gather your thoughts. That's a positive that I find because I do that myself at work if I have had a very sporadic, hectic, a lot of things going on and I need time to regroup myself, it's easier for me to step outside or step away from it, light up a cigarette, think about what's going on. Plus being medically it's a stimulant, it helps stimulate the brain so that way it puts it back together and helps you focus more. That's what I want.

Another positive thing?

Well, as they were talking I was thinking you know there are some good points there for me. It helps my mind drift. After I have had to concentrate at work on like 5 or 6 different things at once, you know multitask or whatever, just sitting and having a cigarette and letting my mind drift is really pleasurable. Also, the comradery aspect is I think a really great aspect of smoking. I mean anyone can go up to someone, really anywhere, and say you know can I borrow a cigarette. I'm jonesing for a cigarette so hard you don't even know. They are going to know exactly what you feel like. You know and it's like "???? here you go. You know even if you don't know them and it's like there is a sense of comradery even if you don't know that person. I can't think of any other aspect in the way that I live my life where you can come together with someone even over something so minute. You know. And for even just a short period of time where there's just kind of harmony. For a very short time, I don't know you; you don't know me, let's just sit and enjoy our cigarette. It's very simple.

Conversations fly.

Yeah, yeah. It's a great conversation starter. I can't count how many times people come to me at the bar. And I have gone out on dates with them or whatever, can I have a cigarette or something. It's a great starter.

The social aspect is not limited to a single social network or subculture.

For being a difference between gay and straight, I really don't see that because from Wyoming myself, there was very few gay people I ever associated with. Most of my friends were straight and I hung out in a straight bar all the time smoking and so forth and even people I smoked with, it was very much the same aspect as what we talked about the positives and negatives. I never really saw any difference between what my lifestyle was and what their lifestyle was compared to smoking.

I understand what you're saying. Like I think it more like the yearning for acceptance might be a reason to start, but you don't know that someone is necessarily gay or straight when you want to have a cigarette. It doesn't really matter. Like I don't care if you're a lesbian or transsexual or if you're a dog. If you're dog had cigarettes, I'll still bum one.

That's an interesting point. So what if you are completely effeminate and you go up to a construction worker and bum a cigarette, would that be....They wouldn't think anything of it? He'll understand the craving that you had. In fact, I've had that happen, a straight woman came up to me and ask if I smoke and I'm not necessarily butch. I mean I was never wearing a feather boa when they did it but still.

Its affects on appearance and monetary costs were mentioned as negative aspects of smoking.

I don't like having to worry about are my teeth yellowing? Having to go out and buy teeth whitening toothpaste for that specifically. I don't like having to worry, like if I am in a bar or club situation where I am trying to show someone I am interested, does my breath smell bad. I just pop a gum or something after I have lit up. I really hate coming home and trying to go to sleep and smelling the smoke on the pillows, on my hair, on my hand. That I hate.

I hate when I get a hole in my favorite shirt because I brushed the cigarette up against it. I hate thinking I burnt my couch, burnt my car, set my house on fire. And I've noticed lately when I wake up it's harder to breath. ??????

I'm more worried about my material possessions. How much it cost. I quit partly because of how much spending I was doing on cigarettes. That was when cigarettes were like \$2.00 a carton. What are they now, about \$8.00 a carton?

\$23 a carton.

If I was still smoking 3 packs a day. I would be broke. I would be spending close to \$23 every 3 days.

People are also noticing the social costs of smoking.

For me it has become "What type of social groups do I want to be involved in?" Because a lot of the people that I deal with on a professional level are all non-smokers. That is what I am finding is my biggest negative right now is because of the acceptance. The acceptance end of it is because I am actually transferring from one group of people into another group of people that are essentially non-smokers. I am finding it more and more difficult to fit in with them. The smell of it never really bothered me because I grew up with it. My parents smoked all the time, they smoked in the house, they smoked around us kids. To me that is almost a comfort zone, because if I can smell it on my clothes and on my pillow, I know at least I am safe. I know I am someplace where I can at least be safe because I was safe with my parents all the time. My teeth yellowing, yeah, that started bugging me here lately, because I have noticed they are getting nasty. My big negative has been the acceptance. Once again, because here I was, I started looking for that acceptance and now...

Acceptance in what way? Like from your social network?

From my social network, yeah. From my support group.

Oh, so in that way. Because it's seen as a negative?

People rag on you because you smoke sometimes and they are like "Oh my go you smell like shit." I'm like back off.

Well it was like co-worker today, not to mention any names, but I went outside to smoke a cigarette and he was behind my desk and the first thing he said was "eww you were just outside doing the nasty thing." And it was like, "yes, as a matter of fact I was and I feel much better." And yeah, I was trying to defend myself but at the same time I had to think about well how offensive am I right now because I do smell like smoke. How many people in my office don't smoke? I greet people everyday at my work and it's very difficult because if I smell bad, like I just smeared tar all over my face, how accepting are they going to be and what kind of front am I putting on for the place that I work? So. Laughing, unintelligible. But it was a good point to bring up.

The social aspect to quitting is also very important.

OK. If you want to quit, who would you first go to? Like whom would you first confide in with that about how you approach to doing it?

I don't know how I feel about that. Partially because I live with two smokers and I can't expect them to quit. It would really really hard and I don't think I have the willpower. I don't. You know, I'd walk in a room and smell it; I would see ashtrays all over, cigarettes hanging up all over the place. Then there would be smokers too. ?? me living on my own, I cannot quit until I live with a non-smoker. If I had someone who bitched at me all the time, like if my boyfriend wasn't a smoker, maybe he could do it, but I don't know who I would go to. I've built my circle

of friends around it I guess.

So, quitting entails almost a major shift.

Drastic change in my lifestyle.

Then there's me who is in that transition period trying to get into a group of non-smokers.

Trying my best not smoking around them and going to a restaurant with them and sitting in a non-smoking section and smoking outside being away from them so I'm not smoking.

Participants reported that gay men were more likely to smoke than heterosexual men, but that lesbians weren't as likely. However, their view of lesbians appear to be very stereotypical and not from experience.

I want to shift a little bit and talk about perceptions. Smoking among the gay smoking in relation to the rest of the population. Like which groups smoke more than gay men and which groups smoke less or the same. Any idea?

I don't think there's anybody that smokes more than gay men.

I was gonna say. I was like how can they not find five smokers. We all smoke for god's sake. What's up with that?

What about lesbians? Do they smoke less?

They're all healthy. They all hike, they fix cars, they bike. Unintelligible. Well once again coming from a small rural community in Wyoming, the gay people that I knew that I wanted to associate with were mostly lesbian. And most of them, it was a split group. There was either the smoking group that didn't hang out with the non-smoking group, because the non-smoking group was all "I could be doing all that kind of stuff and the home repair and softball." And softball won so. And then you turn back around and you have the smoking group that played softball, but there were more social and not as active. Laughing unintelligible.

Here in the bigger cities, you don't have as much interaction between the gay men and the lesbians, per se. And it doesn't matter what kind they are. You just don't have that kind of interaction because we have segregated ourselves.

To say that there is one group that smokes more than anything else, just from my own knowledge of being out with my straight friends and being out with my gay friends and going out with my lesbian friends, it's the gay men that smoke the most. You walk into any gay bar and the place is filled with smoke. It really doesn't matter where it is at. You walk into a lesbian bar and it's not as bad. You walk into a straight bar and it's somewhere in between. Just from my own observations and what I've seen

Gender is an important component to the image of cigarette brands.

So what group smokes what?

The bears, the butch leatherman Marlboros, Camels, Marlboro Red. Marlboro Reds are really big with the

Why do they smoke them?

They are bigger. They're more manly. They're Harsher. They are the harshest that you can get. The bear guys themselves are bigger and harsher. And if it has the word Marlboro on it and you produce that in front of somebody they almost know what your social standards are. Not to put you down or anything. I know you smoke Camels. But the nellier you get and more effeminate that you get within the social groups and then from what I have seen, you find Benson & Hedges.

You find Capris, you find Virginia Slims, Eves. It just kind of depends on what social class you're in and where you find yourself within the gay community and your niche. I agree with that. The higher you go sort of in social straddling the more it becomes whatever You mean on a masculinity scale? Yeah that and more money wise and social skill. There is like the Benson & Hedges Menthol Ultralights, which, of course, they are 100's. Of course.

Well, I saw Joe ?? I really don't remember the Camel camel. I don't remember it. They had pretty much, by the time I had started smoking and started paying attention to smoking and seeing Virginia Slims in magazines, because they always had the lady in the busy New York scene holding her cigarette, she's all like she's on a mission.

So what message would that give?

Because I want to go....I don't know. I have no idea. I mean I Well to you?

I didn't even care. It was a woman. It didn't do anything for me.

Now do they even sell cigarettes anywhere that have never been filtered?

Yes. And it is. And surprisingly I was at a leather bar here, The Triangle, the other night and there was actually somebody smoking no n-filtered and I was really surprised because at the same time the guy was about 6'4", weighed about 320 pounds, pure muscle, dressed all in leather with a cock ring from hell, you know, and it fit his personality to see him smoking that cigarette.

Did he roll it himself or was it already rolled?

It was already pre-rolled but it had no filter on it. I mean that is...he was big and butch and that was the persona he wanted and that was the smoke he was smoking.

However, monetary considerations do influence the purchasing behavior of people.

Well ???? What does Camel the message Camel send to you?

Maybe kind of like the little ?? Maybe it's not quite so Nellie. Maybe like I smoke harder cigarettes, but shit I switch brands every week too. I'm like what do you guys got today? Let's try those. That sounds good.

You are a frugal smoker. You buy what's on sale.

Yep. Pretty much. Lucky Strikes. They were like buy two get two free.

Pressuring people to quit is not effective in the long-term when the likelihood of the pressure ceasing.

I quit for three days once. I went on a trip back to Nebraska and I was taking my boyfriend. And at that point, the boyfriend that I had was pressuring me against smoking in general so I didn't smoke all the way there and that's a 5 ½ hour drive. It was pretty easy because my parents were there and my parents always rag on me too when I smoke. So there were the two days there and the drive back and then as soon as he was gone, I lit up. So, it was that constant nagging that really made me quit. And then once that was gone, I was like "fuck em."

The problems with quitting are that it can result in mood disruptions that may be worse for people's social network to handle.

I was biting everyone's head off. It didn't matter what they were doing. I was right and my husband at the time actually came home with a pack of cigarettes and he says, "you are going to light one of these and you are going to start smoking again." And I said "why?" And he said "because, you are starting to get to the point of becoming unlivable. I cannot live with you, unless I have a cigarette. That was after three days. Then I tried to quit with the patch so that way I would be happy. Well with my skin complex, I couldn't keep the patch on. I tried gum. It didn't work well. I was still really bitchy and crabby and people were getting on my nerves.

Women's Focus Group

There were 10 women participating within the focus group. The average age was 37, with the majority being between the ages of 25 and 39. The group was primarily Caucasian with one African-American with half the group earning less than \$35,000, and the majority having a college education.

Stress was a big reason for women to smoke.

I never used tobacco and I only smoke when I'm really really angry.

When I did smoke, I quit two years ago, but when I did smoke it was often when I was upset and like Kate Clinton once said, "Should I have a cigarette or should I have an emotion." You know like cigarettes are much easier. But, I feel a little better now.

I only smoke when I have been extremely stressed out and when I feel like I am going to literally climb the wall if I don't go out and get that pack of cigarettes and then I decide that's the lesser of two evils and I go ahead and do that and get it out of my system and I'm over it for awhile.

I quit smoking 2 ½ years ago, I quit for a year and a half and I was with somebody that was driving me crazy and we both quit at the same time or whatever. But I had been off them for a year and a half and I just said screw it and just got back into it sort of like as a stress reliever.

I just smoke at work because of all the stress I have. Unintelligible mumbling. Like a half a pack a day outside, but then I don't smoke at home and I don't smoke on the weekends it's just a craving that I have only when I am at work. I know it's odd but.

Bars and alcohol was also associated with smoking.

For me I smoke more when I drank, you know had a beer in my hand. That was usually in the bars, so I smoke more when I was in a social setting with strangers.

Yeah. Even as a smoker, I know that I smoke more when I go out to a bar.

Yeah, you've got one in your hand the minute you're in there. .

Yeah seem like.

Yeah, it's common.

Yeah, it seems like she's got one growing out of her finger.

I light em up more in the bar too, but I always have them sitting in the ashtray while I'm shooting at the pool table. That's probably why I light em up every time I go out.

Initiating tobacco use was associated with having a certain self-image.

I have been smoking since high school because it was cool. Especially when you got women. When I was a teenager, sometimes you snuck cigarettes it was like a sexual deviant. It was like this big evil getting away with something.

One's family could also influence people's initiation.

I didn't start smoking, if this makes any, to show stupidity, I did not start smoking until my father was dying of lung cancer and my whole family was in the smoking ward of the hospital chain smoking. So in order to be around my family, I started smoking.

There is a strong social aspect to smoking.

You can make friends, social contacts negative or positive, bumming a cigarette.

While acknowledging the medial aspects of smoking, participants tended to be fatalistic about it.

Hey we are dying since the day we are born. Little by little. You age. Well I have two next-door neighbors their names are Dee and Eloy. One of them Dee she is in her late 70's and her husband is in his early 80's and he is getting Alzheimer's now or whatever. But they both been smoking since they were teenagers and they don't have anything wrong with them.

I think you live longer from pipe smoking than cigarette smoking. I had a patient that was over a 100 years old and he smoked a pipe every day of his life. I think a lot of it...

Smoking also affects the appearance of one's person and home.

People stink

Stinks up your house.

I can tell a smoker like that. If I am holding an animal close to me.

You mean the fur?

The fur all the way to skin. Sometimes the skin is even discolored.

Wow.

You should see??? Something in the house that we bought. We thought that that it was brown paint and then we kind of wiped at it a little bit. You could see the yellow paint underneath.

My house too. When I quit for a year and a half. I washed the walls every year. When I quit for a year and a half it was so easy, the walls were still white.

Same with the car.

Families and friends did have an influence upon some people's initiation.

I was, as I said earlier, I was with my family at a really sad time because my father was dieing.

Everybody was doing it and to be around the family I may as well have been. I don't know why I really started smoking, I could've smoked??? Sitting there with everybody else chain-smoking. It just seemed like the thing to do.

My uncle Ron used to smoke cigars, big fat ones. I used to sit on his lap and he'd give me a puff every now and then. And so I figured, well this is fun. I get to puff a cigar and then drink a beer. I grew up in Wisconsin we were weaned on beer.... And cheese... You betcha.. But, I just remember buying a couple of packs of cigars and me and my friends went down the alley and just started lighting up cigars. We'd see who could last the longest without turning green. And it was me! I won!! We must have been like 9 or 10 at the time.

Those who are parents themselves feel they are in bind trying to keep their children from initiation while dealing with their own use. They note that stress limits their ability to quit.

I was about 14 or 15 when I started but like after high school and then it wasn't even like one a day and then I used to just stop after I was 16, but I didn't smoke again until, God I'm 29, it was after I had my kids. I just started up again. It's been about 2 years, but again, only at work only at work. I don't even want them to know, my kids, that I smoke. They always talked about the bad things that will happen to you. They watch the commercials. So, you know, I am trying to stop, but at work it's that stress.

There are aspects to smoking that attract people. Lighters are especially an important object in addition to having a cigarette in hand.

I think I started smoking when I was about 16 and I was always intrigued by the smell of cigarettes, especially when it was, and I don't know if it was just lighters that they had at the time, those little Zippo lighters with the flip top, when they flick that and then first lit a cigarette and so I was drawn to

You wanted to flick your bic.

I wanted unintelligible

I've always wanted a Zippo, but I have no reason to own one. Exciting paraphernalia. It's the accessorizing that goes with cigarettes.

That reminds me because whenever my dad is smoked he used a Zippo and when we were always driving home from Granny's house it was that flip of the Zippo that first thing and then the window would go down and that would just put me right to sleep. Just because I knew I was safe.

Many of the women noted their friends and loved ones as playing an important role in quitting.

Who would you first talk to about your desire to stop smoking and who would you look to for support?

My honey.

My honey and Patricia because she's beat on me a lot. She'd be the kick butt person.

A friend of mine that brought to my attention that after I took a swig of water and she tried to take a swig and she said ewww. So I told her...but then I smelled the bottle and it smelled just like a cigarette. It was like the first time after 21 years you would think I would have figured it out before then but as I told her ok, I am going to quit. This stuff stinks. And it was the first

time I realized I really stunk. None of my friends were friendly enough to say Tricia you stink. Well that's not how some of us describe friendliness but....

I told her I was going to quit and then all the rest of my friends and I told them when and that's when I quit and they were all very supportive. They even let me hang around them for a whole month with a dead cigar in my mouth. A dead stinky cigar in my mouth. That's how I quit.

Antidepressants have been found to be effective in helping people quit smoking, but many health insurance companies will not cover its cost for smoking cessation.

I quit a couple times and the last time 3 years ago, I didn't tell anybody I was going to quit. I got a cold and then, oh yeah, I had Wellbutrin in the house that I had never taken and it's the same stuff, they sell it as Zyban. It's an antidepressant type thing and I asked for it once and never used it. I had it in the house and so I took it, and for the first week because I had heard that it was the same stuff and I asked the doctor originally for that and she said, well I can't give you that because we can't write prescriptions for quitting smoking your insurance doesn't cover it. I said well isn't it the same stuff as Wellbutrin, so you know. Write is as depressed and give me Wellbutrin. And I kept in the cabinet for months and then I decided that I would go ahead and try it and it didn't affect me very much, but it did make smoking cigarettes taste terrible. I mean it ruined the taste if them so it really helped me quit. I took them for like a week and a half, two weeks. You know um.

Once one finally quits a person may still begin again under different circumstances.

Two years in July. I wasn't a heavy smoker the last time I quit I mean I had only been smoking like 5 cigarettes a day for the last few years. That's why I wasn't trying to quit. But before that, I mean I had quit a number of times from smoking much more and I quit for about six years. Girlfriends leave, you start smoking again.

Participants will speak to a range of people about quitting. The access to health professionals, however, can be limited for some people.

I talk to my friends. We all say oh yeah I have been on that drug and oh yeah I have done that. We kick it back and forth and see what we can do to get rid of it.

I go on the internet for a lot of information. Everything that I am doing for my knee. It's like I can't get in to see anybody you know. That's where I read it all

I've gone like you talk to your friends, I've talked to doctors; I've talked to various different doctors. You find some that are real supportive and some that are like yeah, yeah, yeah don't take up my time, here's your drugs, go away.

I talk to my brother. He is an ex EMT so he knows something about medical stuff.

I tend to pick the brains of people I know more than I talk to paid professionals that I go to.

There only one person and their motivation...oh you're a nurse well what do you think about this.

Actually I'm going to a paid professional right now. For the last three weeks.

Well I'd like to go to a paid professional, but I can't get in.

Participants reported more smoking among gay men and lesbians than among heterosexual men and women. Limitations on where people can socialize were noted as being a part of the

problem.

I think it's definitely higher. You know when you're community center, even though we have community centers now and we've come a long way, still when there is a lot more alcohol community centers than there are non-alcohol community centers and those are all places to smoke. And the two go hand in hand. You know in order to feel comfortable in a place where you don't know anyone and you know you also at some point in your life in order to be gay you have to put yourself in a situation where everyone is a stranger. This is where.... You have to build your community for yourself outside of the community you came from. And you have to walk a stranger into somewhere, whether its moving to a new city, doing that...granted straight people have to do that too, but not to the same degree as coming out is where you have to leave behind everything that's your you know and smoking eases the way for that, partly because the places that you are going to are smoking places and the other is because it's a calmer. But yeah, the bars themselves, I mean there's a lot more bars than there, there are a lot more alcohol gathering places for gay people than there are non-alcohol places. And alcohol and cigarettes go hand in hand. There's a lot more smoking gathering places than non-smoking. Even in health conscious Colorado.

Sometimes I wonder if gay men??? The whole image that gay men??? AIDS??? Why does it matter if I drink and smoke too much?

That's part of growing up too fast too I think. You know, I know for me, it was like, you know I came out when I was in high school and smoking, the drinking age was only 18 then anyway, but smoking, drinking and being around other gay people all went hand in hand, I mean, you know, you couldn't do one without the other. You know.

Participants' choices in cigarettes are often related to gender presentation/roles.

If you go to a bar and just look at the cigarettes laying on the counter its Marlboro, Marlboro lights, something of the Marlboro family.

That's because we want to be cowboys.

I like Benson and Hedges and Newports myself.

Well, you're a femme.

And you've come a long way baby.

And you only smoke Virginia slims while playing golf.

A cigarette for every occasion.

Yeah you can tell the butches from the femmes.

Yeah see they smoke Marlboro lights in the bar and then as soon as they leave there, they smoke Newports. Some real fru fru cigarette.

Women may not be as rigid when it comes to cigarettes and gender presentation. Menthol cigarettes were also mentioned as being a feminine cigarette.

I don't know though.. The woman I had a crush on when I came out, she smoked Benson and Hedges and her girlfriend smoked Virginia slims and they were both very butch.

Can't judge a femme and a butch anymore.

Not by the cigarette, I don't know.

Salem's and Newport are right in there, those are femmy cigarettes.
They're menthol

Los Angeles

Seven men participated within the focus group ranging in age from 29-42. The majority earn less than \$35,000 a year and only have a high school diploma or equivalent. The race/ethnic composition was quite mixed with Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander represented within the group.

Participants responses were varied as too when people were more likely to smoke.

Nighttime.

After you eat.

When I wake up.

...on your mind or your stressed out.

When I'm stressed.

There's one...like I said, after sex.

When I'm high.

It allows people an excuse to take a break at work.

There's other things, too. Like if you're at work, I wouldn't know what I would possibly take a break for if I didn't smoke. People that don't smoke, I'm like where are you going and why.

Being nervous or in an awkward situation can be allayed by smoking.

It's a security blanket.

What do you mean by a security blanket?

Oh, for example, when I'm in a bar standing and I don't know anybody...

You just break out a cigarette and start smoking.

Why this is the case can be answered with the following remark on the positive aspects of smoking.

Relief of tension. It's a mind thing. It sort of relieves what we're stressing about sometimes

It's also used as an appetite suppressant.

It makes you not eat as much. You stay thin.

Eat prevention.

It suppresses appetites.

While people did report the calm they feel with smoking, others brought up the addiction issue with smoking.

It calms me.

It prevents me from killing people at times. It calms me down.

It's really an addiction. You're only getting calmed down because you need the nicotine.
You're getting rude and getting your fix.
You're getting your fix, right.

No difference in positive aspects for either homosexual or heterosexual men and women.

Do you think some of the positive aspects that you have are different from those of someone who is heterosexual?
No.

Participants reported cost, health, and appearance as negative reasons to smoke.

What do you think are some of the negative aspects of smoking?
Cost.
Yeah, cost.
Yellow fingertips. Yellow teeth.
Your clothes smell.
Your lungs.
It helps aging.

However, negative social aspects were also mentioned, which they found true for both homosexual and heterosexual men and women.

People don't like to be around you that much.
Yeah.
Who cares about that?
I don't like smoking around people that don't smoke.
Yeah, I don't like it either.
Hacking up phlegm.
You have to sit outside in the cold, on the sidewalk because you can't smoke in the bar.
Right.
Right.
It's like you're being cast out. Like you're in a locked cubicle like a lab rat.
Again, do you think that's true for both lesbians, gays and heterosexuals?
Yes.

The participants reported that they first tried cigarettes in their teens. Peers and keeping up an appearance being strong influences upon their initial use.

What get you to [smoke]?
I want to try it.
I was about 13 with some friends. I just wanted to try it. We got to the playground down the street and went up in the slide thing...
All those times when I smoke, I smoke in the...unintelligible.
Talk about facilities...unintelligible.

Yeah, same here I was just trying to be cool with everybody.

Yeah, cool.

I wanted to be cool. I was in a dorm where I was the only high school kid and all the rest of the people in that dorm were college students and I wanted to fit in so bad I smoked with them.

How about you?

Yeah, it's peer pressure. I was 14 and I had a friend I liked a lot and she smoked. I tried it and I hated it but I kept trying to make myself like it.

Why?

I wanted to look cool. Peer pressure.

Family also has a role in people's initiation.

I just smoked because everybody in my family did and it was just the natural thing to do. I was 12 when I started smoking and it really wasn't a big deal. I grew up Germany so people there smoke a lot anyway. So it's not...unintelligible. Can we smoke during this?

Participants reported that they will avoid other smokers and stores that sell cigarettes.

Is there anybody that anyone would avoid if they were trying to quit smoking?

Smokers.

Smokers.

Smokers.

People I hang around with.

Yeah, definitely. You have to.

Any store that sells cigarettes.

That's all of them.

People want something that can reduce their craving, but have had problems getting something.

I wanted to quit smoking. They have this new nasal spray that you spray up your nose to quit smoking and I wanted my doctor to prescribe it for me. He wouldn't because he said that the only way that he would give me a prescription is if I joined a group of people that are quitting smoking and because I didn't want to do that, all I wanted was something to soothe my craving. I didn't want to go join a group. Especially because I get so angry without smoking as it is that I don't want to be around people.

Have you tried the patch?

Yeah, but I smoked even more. I smoked and had the patch and I had two 20 milligrams patches on. Plus they burn. They leave big red circles. I hate them.

Participants reported that in their experience lesbians have a higher rate of smoking. However, it is not universal.

What is your perception or your thoughts on lesbian and gay smoking rates in relation to the rest of the population? Which groups do you think smoke more or which do you think smoke less?
The same.

I think it's lesbians.

In West Hollywood, yeah.

If you're in Silver Lake, it's different, but in West Hollywood, yeah.

It's like smokers anonymous.

It's not cool to smoke in West Hollywood. Every time I walk out of the Jingle to have a cigarette I look around to see if anybody knows me.

Within the gay and lesbian community, who do you think smokes more, lesbians or gay men?
Women.

Lesbians I think smoke more.

Lesbians.

And you?

Lesbians.

I think about the same.

About the same.

I'm trying to think of my opinion. Probably lesbians. You know, gay men they, we want to keep our bodies together. We try to be all healthy. We go to the gym, we quit smoking. Like you said, West Hollywood.

Cigarette brands also have an image that becomes associated with oneself, however, this isn't definite and there are other factors to look at (Taste, nicotine content, etc.)

It's not necessarily that but I work in the Valley now and I notice everybody smokes GPC's or generic cigarettes they're called. They look like they don't care. They don't care what other people think they want to save money. As to where here a lot of people even go spend two or three bucks more on cigarettes. They'll have really fancy ones from France with gold all over the box. I think that people do choose by what other people think. For me it's the taste.

Stress is a major barrier for people when it comes to quitting. Events have a way of affecting people that reduces their ability to do without cigarettes.

Have you ever tried to quit smoking and if so, and if you started smoking again what caused you to start smoking?

I have. I tried the patch for a couple weeks then one day at work I was just stressed out and I just saw somebody smoking and said give me one. And I was back to smoking again.

I was going to try that for six months, it lasted for two days. I had broken up a relationship and stuff like that I really needed a cigarette. I wasn't going to do no drugs.

Cigarettes are not the only factor that is related to nicotine addiction and could influence their

ability to quit and not start again.

So do you think it's sort of like, not to be leading or anything, but I've heard people say that they enjoy the trappings, everything about the smoking or cigarette, from the smell of the Zippo lighter fluid and things like that, so I mean is that part of the mystique or is just the sheer fact that you want to have the cigarette?

People report a stigma attached to smokers.

It's still that way. People everywhere no matter where you're at, it's not as accepted anymore. Sometimes I walk and somebody will walk past me and they'll act like they're dying. I'm like, come on.

The laws concerning smoking may not be easily understood by people and may develop into a type of urban myth among smokers.

Not if the landlord doesn't want it. That's what the article said. The article said it's illegal if the landlord wants to have a non-smoking building then they can make you, when you move in, they can say that this is a non-smoking building and if you agree to it when you move in then your liable not to smoke. If you're already in a place, they can't tell you have to stop smoking now because your already moved in.

Los Angeles Women's focus group

Eleven women participated within the focus group, on average 30 years of age (ranging from 20-44). Four women were white, three were black, two were Hispanic, and two were Asian/Pacific Islander. Over half earn less than \$16,000 a year and the remainder earned more than \$34,000 a year. The majority has at least a high school diploma.

The occasions reported by participants when they used tobacco were similar amongst each other. When eating, bored, and stressed were occasions mentioned as influencing tobacco use.

What are the occasions when you use tobacco?

After eating.

I smoke after I eat.

I always smoke when I wake up in the morning. After I eat, when I used to drink, when I'm out.

When I'm out too.

Nervous. If I have nervous energy.

When I'm nervous or sometimes socially I get nervous, self-conscious and after I eat, too.

When I'm bored.

So when you're bored?

Or sometimes if someone's smoking.

Stress.

Number one.

What are some of the stresses that...or things that kind of stress you out?

Relationships.

Family.

The use of other substances was also associated with tobacco use.

So the question once again is when do you like to smoke?

When I drink alcohol.

After I smoke pot.

When you what?

After she smokes marijuana.

Issues of stress and social support play a role in substance use.

Who do you think contributes to your tobacco use?

Stress.

Relationships.

Anger.

Unhappiness.

Unhappiness?

Yeah.

Being lonely.

People tend to use cigarettes as a device to help them with anxiety or strong emotions.

Can anyone think of any positive aspects about smoking? Anything positive about smoking?
It passes time.

Passes time?

It doesn't make you eat as much. I don't know if that's good but you don't gain weight.

It calms you down if you're angry.

When your angry and you smoke a cigarette, it's like you're blowing out steam. Ok, it's getting lighter now. At this point if you're not smoking, you're still boiling. You're trying to keep things in.

Two reasons, breaks at work because you have to go outside to smoke so there's an automatic break there from work. The other thing is social. When you go outside it's like a whole social like clique kind of thing.

The issue of weight control was probed.

You mentioned that you eat less.

...unintelligible...some people.

How is that significant in your life?

I know people who quit smoking and they gained weight. For me when I'm at home I don't smoke in the house and I get lazy and I don't want to go outside and smoke a cigarette or I by the time I come home at night, it's late and I have a thing about smoking inside, I don't like to smoke inside. So when I don't smoke, I eat. You know, suppose if I'm out and I smoke a cigarette like at work, I don't eat. But when I come home I'm steady eating, I'm eating every time I want a cigarette. So I can relate to what she's saying that when you're smoking, you don't eat as much.

Do you think that's true for people in general or specifically lesbians?

I think people in general.

People in general.

I think more women would gain weight.

The smell was the most common negative characteristic of cigarette smoking. Health and addiction was also mentioned.

What are some negative aspects of smoking?

You stank after a while.

That stale smell in your house.

I can't even smoke in my bedroom. It irritates me.

It stinks in your car. I smoke in my car but the ashtray, I have to dump it. I don't even like people to smoke in my car, if you smoke in my car put the cigarette out the window, dump the ashes out the window.

Lung cancer.

Any sort of addictive behavior. If you're addicted to one thing I think it increases it.

Stress and anxiety were also mentioned as being a part of initiation.

Do you think the negative aspects that you mentioned...?

Oh yeah, I think that's because more people start smoking when they're like 14, 15, 16. Well,

not most people but some people. That's often when you're learning more about yourself. So maybe some need to smoke when they're stressed out, when they come out or about school, et cetera, et cetera. But...unintelligible...started. But it's even more stressful to...unintelligible. That's a really good point actually. Maybe it's putting into...because if you feel like you don't fit in because of you're sexuality then if you smoked you fit in.

You fit into smokers.

Which leads us to the next question. Thinking back to the first time you smoked, how old were you and what were the things that led you to try tobacco? How did you feel and who were you with?

Damn.

I was 21 when I started to smoke. I had a girlfriend at the time who used to go out on these missions. She would disappear on me. I didn't understand it, she just wanted to do her own thing. She would disappear on me and be gone for like a week or two and I didn't know that she was using dope. She left her cigarettes there and I started smoking them. That's how I started smoking.

Cigarettes are used many times with alcohol or other drugs. There is an interaction that people play one substance off another.

I was drinking that's why I started smoking.

Just to try it. That's what made me start. I found a cigarette and just started smoking. Some of you mentioned that like smoking goes with using drugs or drinking...?

Liquor.

When I tried smoking it was that we use to...unintelligible. You think that you're...unintelligible...I don't know how you do it now. But I know you used to take a cigarette and use drugs. After you smoked a...you wanted to smoke a cigarette to balance it out. That's how I started doing it.

So is it to balance it out or...?

Yeah.

It enhances things.

It enhances like if you smoke weed it's like your tongue just have that urge for something. And then sometimes you get that high back up.

Then you start going like this and you smoke that cigarette and it brings you right back up. It seems like it just mellows you out.

That's true because I was smoking weed before I smoked cigarettes. Then when I found out cigarettes boost that high, I thought hey, cool.

Every time you bought you a bag of weed you bought you a pack of cigarettes. They go hand in hand.

Nicotine replacement was stated as being helpful, but with barriers.

You might want to talk to like a nurse or you can go with the nicotine patches.

I think that that's just as bad because then you have to wean yourself off of those too.

That's true. That's true.

You're still chemically dependent on the nicotine.

It's a transition. You don't need the nicotine as badly.

So you might as well chew on a pack of gum.
That's actually why you don't quit. The patches cost more than it costs to smoke.
Will insurance pay anything?
No.

*Social disadvantage was cited as a reason why gays and lesbians smoke more.
Disadvantage/discrimination was cited as an influence for many types of people.*

What is your perception of the lesbian and gay smoking rates in relation to the general population?
Who do you think smokes more, gays and lesbians, heterosexuals, or do you think we smoke less?
50-50.
I think there's more smoking in the gay and lesbian community.
More gays and lesbians?
Do you think there's any particular reason why?
Yeah, I think there's a lot of reasons. Discrimination and extra stresses.
I know a lot of reasons...unintelligible.
It's probably economic.
More economical. I would say straight men. I kind of agree with that but it just depends on what economical is.
Economics. If you smoke more you're economically challenged.

Views are mixed as to who smokes more, men or women.

Who smokes more? I don't know. Men.
They're the ones that really got the problems. My opinion is that society really condemns men for their homosexuality more than they condemn the women. You have gay bashing. Where as the men bend against towards women. They call us a bunch of dykes or bull daggers or lesbians or whatever. But they want to beat up a man.
I've seen more women smoke here than men. And I get to...unintelligible. So I've seen more women.
Many more women here than men.

Stress also affects people's ability to quit.

Considering that you tried quitting, if you started back, why? What led you to start back?
I wanted a cigarette bad. I couldn't wait to get a cigarette.
It seems to calm me down when I'm really upset. That's what made me start over again.
I just wanted to smoke.
My boss made me go smoke. I was about to get fired.

Minneapolis Youth Focus Group

Nine youth, with the average age of 20 years, participated within the focus group. The youth focus group was of mixed gender, but predominately male. The majority of the group was white, 2 were African-American, 1 Asian, and 2 did not identify a race/ethnicity. The majority also has, at least, a high school education, and earns less than \$16,000.

Stress has been cited as influencing people's smoking desire, in addition, the habit or addiction of cigarette smoking was mentioned.

Mostly after, before or after I eat or when I wake up in the morning or go to bed, after I get out of the shower, after I take a crap.

When I get stressed out.

When you're stressed out? What are some of the things that stress you out?

Family on certain issues. Friends.

So friends?

Yeah.

Boredom. Unintelligible. Nothing to do.

I just smoke. I don't know why or when, just because, I do. Unintelligible. I wake up in the morning and...if I haven't had a cigarette yet and then I'll smoke. What I really want first thing in the morning is a cigarette.

Mine would be peer pressure. I have to be like...unintelligible.

Work stress.

Work stress?

Yes. When you work for a...corporation...unintelligible.

I get a craving all the time so...unintelligible.

I always know if I'm stressed when I'm at the end of my rope. That's probably why I'm not really a smoker. But I had to take a friend of mine to the hospital a few weeks ago and it was a really stressful situation. I sat and chain smoked. I hadn't had a cigarette in weeks but I sat and smoked. I only succumb to smoking out of stress. It's like, I can't handle it.

I guess I would smoke if I was stressed. Like I would be looking for someone and they were late. I think that would stress me out so I wouldn't smoke for that but if I was up against a deadline like this past thing that I went through. The newsletter. I didn't have an article published yet so I smoked a lot of cigarettes before I actually did it. that calmed me down.

The bar scene is also is associated with smoking.

I smoke at the bar. If I've had a couple drinks then I always want to have a cigarette. Or if I'm feeling self-conscious.

At the bar is the main one. Around other friends that smoke. After my work shifts. I like to during breaks just because it fills the time.

Smoking has been mentioned as being a better alternative to other drugs.

Better than drugs.

Better than drugs? Anything that you find positive about it?

I was really depressed and I didn't want to turn to drugs so I turned to smoking.

There is also a significant social component to smoking.

Community.

Community?

You could go anywhere and the smokers have a camaraderie and you can start talking about what you want.

You can sit and do nothing and still look like you're doing something. like have you noticed if you're waiting outside for somebody and you're just sitting there on the steps not doing anything you feel dumb. But if you're sitting there smoking a cigarette you're doing something. it's like you have a reason to be there.

In some places it's considered socially acceptable. Also to be elite. That helps you get that big cattle prod of smokers to their designated smoking zone. I just think...unintelligible.

Participants mentioned numerous reasons and influences to their initiation. Friends, family, social presentation, and curiosity all were mentioned by participants.

I wanted the girl that gave me the cigarette OK. For real she was a really cool girl that lived down the street and she let me hang out with her and she smoked and I had to.

The first...down the street when I was thirteen there was this really cute boy who offered me a cigarette so I took it and smoked it even though I had...unintelligible. And my mom found out because she smelled it on me and she made me smoke an entire pack and I got really sick so I couldn't smoke again.

My grandmother did that. my mom brought me to see my grandmother when I was 15 and my grandmother had gotten a whole carton of Lucky Strikes and gave me a week to smoke them. She said if I wasn't done with the carton in a week that I couldn't smoke. I was smoking day and night.

I saw my parents smoking. watching my parents as I grew up smoking. they gave me the impression that it's OK. It's like you're older and you're an adult. You can't smoke when you're below 18. it makes you seem like an adult when you are smoking.

I lived in the country where if you smoked you were considered the rebel and...unintelligible. That's why I started.

How about you?

I was with the wrong crowd my whole life and I just picked it up.

I will have to say brand names and what it taste like. I mean I kind of like related with the brand name or whatever. The thought of hearing the brand name. I just wanted to know what it taste like and looked like.

When quitting, some will tell others and others will not.

I would tell everyone that I knew so that people would know. Kind of like help me keep myself in check. I didn't just tell one person or not tell anybody because then I had to kind of save face by not smoking.

It would be something that I would have to prove to myself and so I started the addiction and I need to quit by myself.

Exactly.

I would probably have to try to do it myself. Stop smoking at home by myself. Set a date and go without a cigarette all day and keep going like that until I get through it.

It's kind of like what I did when I quit. At first I quit ever smoking by myself. I made it just a social thing and I never had a cigarette alone and that really helps because it was easier to quit that way.

Bars have been mentioned as being a place to avoid while quitting.

I think I maybe wouldn't want to go to a bar unless it's like a dance club. If I'm at a club there's stuff to do but at a bar you're like sitting. It's really the hardest place to not smoke. I just did it last night for the first time in a really long time and it was because I was sitting at a table with people in the bar for a really long time watching them smoke and this girl smoked the kind of cigarettes that I used to smoke. that always does it to me too. If I see my favorite kind of cigarettes I was like, oh.

Gay men and lesbians smoke more than heterosexual men and women, and lesbians smoke more than gay men, the reason being stress, especially stress that arises from discrimination and marginalization.

Big question? What is your perception of lesbian and gay smoking rates in relation to the rest of the population?

Higher.

Gay men smoke more than straight men. Lesbians smoke less than gay men.

I had gay youth and people appear to smoke more than straight people because there is more stress in a gay persons life.

Why do you think there's more stress?

If your queer you have more issues to deal with. You got the straight guy walking up to you, they have racism to deal with, they have homophobics to deal with, they have love problems. They have love issues. They have work problems getting a job.

Coming out. Family. Trying to find a job.

You've got a...unintelligible...right there.

...probably 60, 65, 75% of...unintelligible...are gay.

I think this may be a stereotype but I think gay men smoke most because their most promiscuous and loose with the search of a relationship and the instability that can be.

And that's the one universal symbol in gay men specifically. There's so many different types of gay men but every type of gay man smokes. Unintelligible. It's not...that the other aspects like in straight men...unintelligible...straight professional...smoke but a gay professional.

More gay people go to the bars, too.

Stress also has been cited as a reason people start smoking again after quitting.

What are some of the reasons or what is the reason why you started again?

Stress.

Stress.
Yeah.

Minneapolis Men's Focus Group

Two men participated within the Focus Group. Both were white, earn over \$40,000 a year, college educated, and over the age of 40.

The two men tended to smoke first thing in the morning.

What are the...when do you normally smoke or use tobacco?

A cigarette first thing in the morning.

First thing in the morning?

Uh-huh. Then throughout the day.

Pretty scheduled. Nearly anytime I'm in my car, however. Other than that, scheduled at various points throughout the day and typically not until I'm leaving for work in the morning and then again, last thing at night before I go to bed.

Stress and relaxation were reasons the men stated were reasons they smoked.

Yeah, it is. For myself I suppose stress does contribute some but primary for me is either boredom or like something to occupy my time and my fingers. And just the relaxing effects.

What are some of the stressful situations that you...?

Oh, stressful situations, well. I work in marketing. The odd thick skulled client when I can finally get them off the phone and it's time to walk away for a while.

I'm probably unusual because I smoke when I'm relaxed and the more stress I'm under the less likely I am to smoke. Which is...unintelligible...smoking in places I could smoke...unintelligible...stress. So for me to relax is to have a cigarette but it's not because I'm so stressed out that I'm trying to use a cigarette to relax but I think that's counter to the norm.

One man talked about how he likes to smoke, likes the image it has and not affected by media.

I like smoking. I like to smoke. I don't say I enjoy smoking. I don't enjoy it but I like it. I think it looks sexy. I think it's, in a social situation, it contributes to a social atmosphere. I'm not embarrassed for smoking. I don't believe all the ads about how gross it looks. I don't think it looks gross. I think I tend to feel that there's a certain style associated with smoking.

So what is it about it that you find sexy? If you can go back to that part.

There's a movie, actresses in the movies or whether it's the Marlboro Man but it's irrespective of gender, I think. The commercial marketing of movies and just people how they behave. I was in uptown this weekend and I saw a lot of fairly young people walking in the street smoking and I thought they looked pretty cool. It has nothing to do with advertising. It's just how they happened to look. I know it's not healthy but to honest about it that would be more of a social aspect. So not in terms of health positive.

One of the men talked about how he likes the image attached to smoking, while another refers to a possible biological connection.

I remember when I was in grade school I knew I wanted to smoke when I grew up. I saw adults smoking in a very cool and sophisticated way and that made it appetizing. Just seeing the adults,

again, not...unintelligible...but like the adult thing to do. So I started in junior high. But I just knew I wanted to smoke.

Having done a little bit of study on the narcotic effect of the nicotine et cetera, I have supposed for some while...to answer the question directly, the first time I recall smoking I was probably 15 years old but I suspect that I was predisposed to it long before that because my mother smoked during her pregnancy. My father smoked until I was 16 or 17 and then he did quit. In my family there are three children. My brother who is the youngest, I'm the oldest, also smoked until just a couple of years ago. My sister never smoked. Actually she tried it a couple times and it made her physically ill. But I wonder if there isn't some kind of biological connection that predisposes people.

Heterosexual people were mentioned as smoking more than gay men and lesbians, and gay men more than lesbians. Caveats were stated about the age of women and not participating within a bar culture.

What are your perceptions of lesbian and gay smoking rates in relation to the rest of the population? Such as which groups do you think smoke more and less? Between lesbians and gay and hetero.

Oh. I don't know. I don't see any difference.

In my own experience I would have to lean toward the heterosexual population having a higher incidence. That perception could easily be skewed because I'm not a bar person. I don't...our social life, my partner and I, doesn't involve going to the bars on Friday or Saturday night. If we do it's because we've got friends from out of town here and they want to go out. Of those friends who travel here to stay for a weekend or a week they, I can think of two couples who we see maybe annually that would want to go out one night. Actually, out of those two couples neither of them smokes.

Within the lesbian and gay community who do you perceive as smoking more? Do you think it's lesbians or gay men?

Supposedly, in the overall population which isn't divided by sexual orientation, traditionally a higher percentage of men smoke than women but more younger women are smoking so the percentage has been equalizing more as have lung cancer rates of women picking up, heart disease picking up.

Similarly, I would think that not because I insist that there be a similar area but just in terms of your...in observing I can't say there's that much difference between men and women. Many don't smoke. A significant number do. I just see it so much more related to temperament and other elements of lifestyle than to gender or to orientation.

I can virtually echo everything you've said. If I were going to make a call I would have to air on the side of conventional wisdom and say it's probably the gay population as opposed to lesbian. Just because I'm going to go with the preponderance of males versus females.

Participants view smoking as being an overrated health issue, and refers to health rates of other countries as proof.

I exercise a lot. Do a lot of healthy things. So I truly don't believe, this is probably going beyond your question. I do think smoking is bad but I think the anti-smoking thing has gotten so

disproportionate to other health problems such as an incinerator...coming out because its putting dioxin, spewing that into the air for smokers and non-smokers alike. There are a lot of things that aren't good, not necessarily smoking but we've have such a huge emphasis on smoking alone that, though I think it's bad, I just can't honestly give it that...that's seemingly the number one health issue in this country or something like that. In some third world countries people smoke a lot but they don't have any higher incidence of respiratory disease than we do but maybe in China they drink a lot of green tea and green tea is good for the lungs and so things kind of balance out and so in this country we're going to smoke, not drink much water, drink a lot of booze, sit on a bar stool not getting exercise. You're not eating well in that environment and those things coerced together are negative. You can do a lot of good things and you can negate them by smoking that's true but because I am not convinced that smoking is the issue. Failure to keep with the quitting is not something that ...unintelligible.

I don't smoke cigars but I thought it was really pathetic that Hilary Clinton wouldn't let Bill smoke cigars in the White House. I mean this is pre-Monica but the point was that to me I always thought...cigars didn't like them. It's part of the good life. Having a nice meal and the whole cigar thing is kind... but it was big for a few years. People were starting to say...about cigars. It's almost a reaction against Puritanism with all this don't smoke. Having traveled in Europe. A few countries. Those countries that I have been to are, their smoking policies or there policies towards smokers are far more civilized we currently employ in this country. I haven't seen numbers. I won't claim that I know what they are but I very much doubt that they are having a...I know for one that there are far more smokers in France, for instance, then there are here. I don't believe that they are suffering a greater consequence than we are in our country.

Garden Grove, CA
API gay men

Four gay men of Asian/Pacific Islander descent participated within the focus group. All four were between the ages of 20 and 30 years of age, most having some college education, and most earning more than \$34,000 a year.

Friends may have an impact upon people's smoking behavior.

In my situation, friends that are close to me will understand if I don't smoke but if you're in a setting where you're trying to fit in with the in-crowd, such as a club or anything like that, than most likely you'd probably be persuaded to take a cigarette just to be with the people. You might feel kind of foolish being in a crowd and everyone's smoking and everyone's standing there within the group just not having something to do. Everyone else is smoking.

How does smoking a cigarette be something to do? Tell me a little bit more about that.

Well, if everyone else, let's say, the situation I was in was that there was four people including myself, three of them smoked and I just stood there.

In a club?

Right, in a club. When the three of them are smoking there's no talking involved. At least they're doing something. Well, then the fourth person just kind of stands there and doesn't do anything. They might be persuaded just to smoke so they don't look like they're just kind of not part of the group. It sounds silly but it's happened.

The addictive aspects of smoking was mentioned, but there remains a strong psychological component

Does anyone have another reason that they think contributes to their smoking?

I want to say it's kind of like addiction sometimes. And there's like XXX say earlier, it's more like a social dependent thing. The clubs. It's sometimes more personal like. You just smoke because you feel like smoking. You want to smoke because you want to smoke. And part of being, well, this is how I feel. I don't feel much better but at least I feel like I have something else to do when I smoke instead of doing something else. It's more like pain release or like a long way from reality. Not think of things too much. Kind of like addiction.

Tell me more about those situations. Like wanting to run away from reality or pain release.

What are the situations where you feel like that?

Take me, for example, sometimes I'm thinking about something and I couldn't find a solution or find an answer to solve the problem and I'll be stuck. I get frustrated. The best way for me to release my frustrations is through smoking.

Do you have an example of something that happened and then you started to smoke? Something that you feel comfortable sharing.

For example, let's say I have an exam the next day and I'm totally not prepared for it and I get frustrated. I know that I only have one day to study for it but there's no way I can cover all the chapters. So I got frustrated and I got obnoxious and the best way to release, not release, but to minimize my obnoxious is smoking. It might help but it doesn't help totally.

That would make your what? I didn't catch that.

Obnoxious. Nervousness.
You mean anxious?
Anxious.

Media personalities also have been reported to influence people's tobacco use.

Can you think of a role model or a person from the media that would you think influences API men or women?

Perhaps, for me and some of my friends, we kind of grew up watching I Love Lucy. And Lucille Ball used to smoke on her show. And now, if you were to watch, I mean Sex and the City, Sarah Jessica Parker, her character is smoking all the time.

Who?

Sarah Jessica Parker, the character she plays on the show is constantly smoking. Although that show is primarily targeted for straight women a lot of gay men do watch the show. I watch the show. I'm sure other people have in here too.

Weight control was noted as a positive aspect of smoking.

What are some of the positive aspects of smoking? All the things that you like about it.

Losing weight.

Losing weight?

That is true.

So smoking helps you lose weight?

Kill you appetite.

Really?

Yeah, it does.

That's good. Maybe I should try it.

Smoke instead of have dinner.

Killing time and to alevve boredom were also noted as reasons to smoke. Boredom can also be a cue for relapse.

Other positives?

Alleviates boredom.

Kills time.

Tell me more about that. Killing time and alleviating boredom. How does it help with that?

You know when you have nothing to do and you try do have something do, smoking is something to do. Inexpensive. It's something to do. Going to movie, too expensive. Going to dinner, don't got anyone to go with. Smoking, that's something to do.

So smoking is relatively less expensive than other things you can do?

Yes. Inexpensive entertainment.

So what about killing time? You're talking more about alleviating boredom. What about smoking for killing time?

I guess for killing time, let's say that you were to meet friends somewhere and you got there early and you just had to wait there, smoking would be something you can do. One thing you

can do.

And how do you feel when you're doing that? Say you're waiting for something and you not smoking and you're waiting and you're smoking. What's the difference?

It's like, I'm going to use a comparison for this. Let's say that you were to go to a restaurant by yourself. Whenever I go to a restaurant by myself I would bring a book or some sort of activity to do by yourself so you don't just sit there and wait for your meal. I guess with smoking it's the same thing, instead of just bringing a book or something one of your items can be a cigarette. You have the option of bringing a book, a cigarette or an activity and some people just choose cigarettes.

Considering that I didn't have a book or anything with me and considering that there were cigarettes available at the coffee shop that you're waiting at, it can be tempting.

Friends and family play an important role in people's initiation by giving people access to cigarettes (usually free and without having to go to a store) and by teaching them how to smoke.

So thinking back to the first time you used tobacco, what were the things that led you to want to try it? To try smoking?

The first time, the very first time. The first time I smoked I was motivated by my roommate because he always smoked. So one day I just feel like, hey...

We had an apartment together and he's Asian too. I think it was a cool thing to smoke so I picked up a cigarette and started smoking because all my friends they all smoke. So it's only me that don't smoke so I said OK give it a try.

So how did you feel when you started?

For me it was kind of like a new experience. I don't really see it as a bad or good. I just wanted to give it a try and see if I like it. Not necessarily I would like smoking but I believe that there must be some psychological reason why I smoke but probably I just refuse to realize it. I know that smoking is not good for your health but I still do it.

Does anyone else remember their first time they tried a cigarette?

Me, one night when I was 16 and my parents went to church and I stayed home. I didn't have nothing to do so I stay in bed and lay down. I just go up there and got a cigarette.

So the cigarettes were at your house already?

Yeah. My parent didn't know I smoked but if they found out that I smoke maybe they didn't like me. So I just hide them. I didn't let them know that I smoke.

Whose cigarettes were they that you tried?

They were my uncles.

Your uncles?

Yeah. He left the cigarettes in the drawer and I took them out and I smoked.

So how did it feel to try the first one?

I felt a little strange but I enjoy it. I enjoyed it. At first I smoked I cough a lot. I cough, I cough, I cough. And tear running down at the same time. I like it. I like the smell. I like the smell of the smoke coming up.

I remember the first time I smoke and I don't even know how to smoke. My roommate had to show me. You gotta inhale and release. That's how I learned.

Because all the guys, a group of us, you know what it was like.

Unintelligible...they're all smoking together. In backyards...unintelligible...show them how to

do it. You inhale it in and just hold it in your lungs. Hold it in your lungs for one or two seconds and release.

That's like trying it the first time.

Cigarettes can have different images to people. Some can be masculine and others more feminine.

Do you think any images associated with any particular brands that are attractive to gay API men or women? What's the image of smoking mean to gay API people?

Fabulous.

Means you're fabulous?

Maybe you look elegant.

Anything else?

Looks like a man.

So it's a masculine thing to do?

Yeah, it's a masculine thing to do.

Any other images? Do you think any of those images are associated more with one brand than another for gay API?

You know, the Marlboro has...with a male model. What's his name? Cowboy?

Cowboy?

Cowboy, Marlboro guy.

He's gay.

He's dead. He died of AIDS.

John Wayne.

How is John Wayne different?

John Wayne looked so typically, hats always fixed up.

It's very funny because the other day I was driving back home on the 60 freeway. I was passing by the Hacienda Heights and there's this big huge poster board and there's this girl and she's smoking a cigarette. She was very pretty. I was actually driving and I take a look at her. She doesn't do anything to me but I just have that...she grabbed my attention.

What did she symbolize to you?

Smoking make you look attractive. Or smoking make you look elegant. Or smoking make you look more like the center of society or the party or whatever. The glimmer image.

Advertisements were effective in making people think, not necessarily getting them to quit.

Dog urine. It's something about a chemical that's in dog urine that's also used in cigarettes.

That are also used into making cigarettes. So they said that here, you might as well take my dog urine and put it in there. It's a good product. They were just telling you. It was a clever way of saying hey, what's in your cigarette. They also did it with ammonia. I might as well just smoke Windex. That sort of thing. So that kind of like, you think about it.

What did you think about it?

I thought it was really effective. It was like wow, it made you think. It probably won't make you quit right away but it will get you to think about it.

A scary ad was effective in reaching someone.

Unintelligible...picture of an old man that...unintelligible. My name is...I am 61 years old and the reason I stop smoking, I quit smoking because my nephew tell me oh, blah blah, I don't want you to die. So the reason they stop smoking is because I still want to see my niece. That's really horrible ad. It's terrible.

What do you think is horrible about it?

It's scary.

It's scary?

Yeah, it's scary. It's real.

So how did it feel to see that?

Scary.

Did you feel like you wanted to quit?

Well, fortunately, I don't think that I am a heavy smoker like her. I smoke enough that in order to be like her after 50 years. It scare me to try not to smoke or not.

Individuals are utilizing harm reduction in regards to their smoking. Utilizing light cigarettes.

Personally, I think that, I feel much better without smoking but sometimes I still smoking because one thing that lead to peer pressure, if I had a choice, if I'm going to smoke I would tend to smoke lighter cigarettes than a heavier cigarette. And I'm going to smoke less than other people. And the only time that I do smoke is sometimes because I'm depressed or under frustration or something else then I will smoke. Usually, normally, or sometimes I smoke for fun.

Did anyone else have a perception similar to that? That smoking lighter cigarettes or smoking less would be healthier for you? I know you already talked a little bit about it.

Yeah.

I guess if you start off being a heavy smoker and you just slowly take baby steps and smoke less and less each day then that could be, that to me seems like it's healthier. If you start off by smoking two packs a day and like six months later and you're just smoking one, that's an improvement. So it would be healthier.

Orange County Latino Focus Group

Five men participated within the focus group, all were Latino, and all were gay men. Over two-thirds of the men earn less than \$35,000 a year, and were on average 37 years old.

Social aspect to cigarettes. The coffee connection as well.

I enjoy chatting on the computer.

In the chat room?

Yeah, in the chat room. I have the coffee, I have the cigarette, I socialize. I can go to the bars, I can go anywhere outside when I am with my friends. I have the drinks or...

Partying and alcohol association with cigarettes.

You are talking about when we smoke the most. In the cases when I have a party or I go to a party because I smoke like two packs a day. When I go to a place...I smoke like four packs. When I have a shot of tequila, usually five minutes later I have to smoke. I have to. And it has to be Marlboro Red because if I smoke Marlboro Light I still need to have a Red one. It doesn't matter how many Lights I smoke because I still need the Red one.

Usually I smoke a cigarette or two and then I smoke one or two right before I go to bed too. And then if I drink any alcohol probably then instead of two or four that number goes up probably six or seven. Something like that.

That's when I smoke the most. With alcohol.

So you don't smoke when you first get up?

No. I can though if I want. I mean I will if I really want to. Then I'll quit smoking for like a year, six months, nine months and then I'll smoke. But usually when I would do a lot of speed and a lot of drinking. Boy that was a lot of smoking.

Yeah.

When you did speed or drinking a lot are you with a lot of people?

Yes.

So it was like a party atmosphere? One other person or more?

More than one other person. It can be more than one other person. It can be by yourself, too.

Smoking restrictions and changes in attitudes caused people to alter their smoking pattern.

I work in the food industry and it's the worst thing to do is to have your server come up and even though you wash your hands there's still that, you know. I wouldn't want to...that's just my morals. I work in a restaurant where I bartend and I don't want to serve your food and you smell like smoke. That's probably why I could just go...I could go, if I have to work a double shift, it would go from the afternoon lunch and run through dinner then I'm fine. Then like Martin says, sometimes late at night you'll have those two cigarettes. You're sitting on the porch. And then you're whole day was completed and that's your, I don't know.

It's just a cigarette. I don't know. I feel bad. For example, last Christmas my whole family

from Mexico was here and they don't smoke. It was freezing outside during Christmas and I was outside smoking myself. What's up with this. I'm the only one who's smoking. And everyone was inside. As soon as I got inside the room I felt so bad because everyone was like, you went to smoke. It was Christmas, I was having a couple drinks and I was in a party mood and everybody was inside the house. I went outside to smoke. I feel terrible. I really do.

When they start doing those regulations. I remember when I started smoking it was the glamour and the fashion and you were nice smoking. Now everybody looks at you like an animal. We know that we can't smoke in restaurants or in clubs or anywhere at work. Like, two weeks ago when I went to Phoenix, they don't have all those regulations over there. So I discovered that even though I'm used to...if I come here I know that I can't smoke in here but as soon as I see someone smoking I go to my pack and I start to smoke again. So when I was in Phoenix I was happy. I was smoking in the cars, in the hotels and everywhere.

I feel weird. The last time I was New York I went to the bar and I feel really bad even smoking inside the bar because I'm not used to it anymore. Smoking inside the bar. Everybody was smoking. When I pull out my cigarette I felt like somebody was going to point me out, oh, he's smoking inside the bar.

Perceive a change among youth.

Because now as soon as you get home to my brothers house if I had a smoke, my nephew will say, oh you smoked. He's only eleven years old, he's going to say, oh you smoked that's bad for you. I feel guilty.

How funny, isn't it? When we were growing up it was like the Marlboro commercials, smoking, smoking, smoking when we were kids. Now it's turned around and it's bad.

Some participants enjoy smoking and see it as helping them relax.

What are some of the things about smoking that are positive for you? Or we can do it the other way and talk about the negative things. Which ones do you want to start with?

You use things in moderation, I believe and don't exceed, I mean, maybe the positive in smoking is the relaxation that you get over the completion of the day for yourself. Maybe it's after you have a good meal. Tobacco actually tastes really good. But if you're going to sit there and smoke and you don't even know that you have a cigarette in your hand. I've actually seen people with two cigarettes going at one time and they don't even know it. Then I think that you're like an addict. Then you become a smoking addict. But if you can moderate yourself and say ok, today is a morning to have a cigarette, then enjoy the cigarette.

I would rather not smoke at all.

Taste the tobacco and pleaurize yourself like that. Or I'll get home tonight and it will be nice and then the sun will set and you just have a cocktail and smoke a cigarette. But to just sit there and kind of...because I have also smoked while being nervous or problems at the house.

It is seen as a nervous habit, rather than actual relaxation.

How does smoking help you when you're nervous?

Something other than bouncing your leg or pacing. It supplements another nervous habit. You just smoke and think about it. But that's kind of bad smoking. Nervous smoking like that. Because then after that's done, it only tranquilizes for three...when you're smoking you it tranquilizes you for two to three minutes but then again you're up and down pacing.

It's also useful for folk remedies.

There's an old remedy that my mom would...when my eye would twitch she would blow smoke in it. there's positive.

You have air in there.

...and she'd blow smoke in it. It's a remedy, it's true. An old Mexican remedy.

When the mosquitoes are around you and you smoke the mosquitoes...

Context influences people's smoking behavior and ability to quit smoking cigarettes. Norms in Mexico are very different than those here in Calif., especially in regards to how one's family reacts.

There are no positive but maybe I'm thinking of...I'm 37 so when I started smoking I was like eleven and I think it was a fashion. Now I've been smoking for almost twenty something years and I'm very attached to the tobacco and maybe it's not positive but it's really hard to quit. I quit once for a year and I stopped smoking completely but I went to Mexico and everyone smokes over there. As soon as I got there, I started to smoke again. I couldn't stop. That's happened to me twice. I stopped smoking here then I go to vacation to Mexico for one or two days and everyone's smoking. Because all my friends smoke there. Was it different when you went to Phoenix or Las Vegas?

Yeah.

How is it different?

The difference is because...in my opinion is that in Phoenix I was with a co-worker and they looked at me like I was strange and I went with the smokers so that I know that I wouldn't be recognized by someone here. But in Mexico with my friends and my family nobody cares. They smoke and it wouldn't good...unintelligible.

When I go to Mexico I go with the mentality that I can do anything I want there. Drink, drive, smoke, smoke whatever I want to, go to parties.

No rules.

So I'm not breaking any rules.

And you can smoke in Mexico in your house, even my father gives me cigarettes.

Cigarettes are also used in dealing with people's depression. Distress aspect.

I don't know if this is positive or not but when I'm depressed I smoke a lot.

Does it help you feel less depressed?

What?

Does it help in any way?

Yeah.

Do you feel better when you smoke?

Yes, believe me. When I don't have any problems I can smoke two or three and I can smoke no more. But when I'm depressed I can smoke one by one by one.

Cigarettes are used in conjunction with other substances.

When I smoke crack I had to have a cigarette.

I have to have a cigarette when I get high. I have to. I don't like to get high if I don't have a cigarette. I'd go crazy.

So it's a augmentation to...when you say get high you mean using drugs or alcohol?

Drink.

Both.

Cigarettes are also used to replace the use of other substances.

On once occasion when I went with my friends to the desert they used drugs there. They smoked marijuana, speed. They used many different drugs. The ones that they offer to me and I said that I want to smoke a cigarette not that. So for me that is a positive.

So instead of using drugs you smoke a cigarette. Do you think that's for a lot of people that they make a decision like that?

...a person.

Yeah.

...there's your popular thing on smoking.

Omaha

Men's group

Four men participated in the focus group; their ages were 23, 33, 34, and 40. Two were white, one Native American, and one African-American. Two earned less than \$16,000 a year and two less than \$35,000, while three have college experience and one only has a high school diploma.

Participants' smoking behavior is influenced by others.

Friends. Self, mainly. But friends, generally. When someone else smokes, generally, it makes me think about smoking.

Burn one right along with them. You know what I mean?

Usually, I smoke more obviously when I'm with people that smoke.

There isn't a specific person or entity mentioned that has the most influence on people.

Mine is more probably, I would say initially ads. Like the Marlboro man, for example, thinking that's cool and rugged. I would say a form of peer pressure, if you will. Not so much directly but in my case indirectly. Some of my friends were doing it and they seemed to be the coolest guys or girls. So I would say peer pressure and advertisement for the most part.

One's social network can both influence smoking behavior...

I would basically look towards my friends that don't smoke for support and friends that do smoke but at the same time I would try to avoid situations where I see smoke so that some of our friends who do smoke. If they're over at my house I would ask them not to smoke or maybe outside or whatever. But that's who I would definitely avoid, people who do smoke. And situations induce my smoking. Like the drinking, for example. The stress. Try to reduce it as much as possible. We're all going to have it but still. People as far as support, that's a good one because I have a very limited support system.

Can you think of any of the reasons why gay men would pick the brands of cigarettes that they choose?

Probably from their parents. That their parents smoked them, probably.

I would have to avoid, not so much my friends in Omaha but my friends because they moved from Sioux Falls in February and anytime that I would be around them it would just be weird or the people that I smoked with at camp all the time. Whenever we talk on the phone we usually like are you having a cigarette, OK good so am I. I would have to avoid them

And help them stop smoking or limit their smoking.

With me, my friends would be my support. What little friends I got, they're the ones that always seem to be behind me. That's very few and far between. I'm very thankful for having friends and I'm thanking for having the support of my few friends that I got.

My boyfriend doesn't smoke and doesn't like the fact that I smoke so when I'm around him I usually don't smoke that much just because there's not that opportunity to, I don't smoke in my house. I don't smoke in his house. I don't smoke in either of our cars. It's usually, when I'm with him, I try to be respectful and not smoke when I'm around him.

It's also used as a tool within social circumstances to control how sociable one is in a group setting.

You can be more, not standoffish, when you're at the bar you can have a cigarette or you can excuse yourself to go have a cigarette or you can meet people by bumming a light.

It is something one can do in awkward situations.

Contributes? A lot of it is the feel. It's kind of like a self protection type thing. I know that if I'm smoking I seem to be more in control or I feel that I'm more in control or if I'm in a situation where I'm with a group of people and I don't know them but I'm expected to be friendly and fun then if they're all talking and I'm bored it's something to do. It's my own conversational partner is having a cigarette. Then it's not like oh, they're just sitting there bored. The don't have anything to do. When I first moved to Omaha and I didn't know anybody I would go out to the bars and instead of just feeling like I was sitting there waiting for somebody to come up and talk to me I would just smoke cigarettes. It's like having some kind of activity to do. That's a lot of it.

Smoking could become a significant part of someone's social group.

We always talked about when I worked at summer camps there was a fair amount of smokers that worked with the kids and we'd sneak off and that was our time to really get to know one another because you just sit there and you have these conversations because you're in this forced community all of a sudden of smokers. You get to know people. You get to know the other smokers very well because of the forced community.

Whenever I'm gone me and my boyfriends friends if there is somebody who's a smoker I just latch on to that person. Finally there's another smoker in this room.

Smoking areas become socializing areas.

Yeah. And when you go to any party and you can't smoke there at the party then you are all the time where goes the smoker to smoke and they point you to the place. The atmosphere is better. We joke, we laugh. All the time good time with the smokers at the party. When you go to the party you know nobody and you want to meet people because you have to go smoke a cigarette. It's a smoking area.

Smokers become a new social group because of the stigma and social controls placed on smokers.

You are definitely a community. It's like you're cowering on the other side because people don't like smokers.

Yeah. I feel like one of the proud and few.

Stress is also a factor in people's smoking behavior.

generally at times that I feel for some reason or another high stressful situations, I tend to smoke more.

Anytime that I get stressed out or emotional or angry.

Yeah. I think it's stress. I smoked now for twenty something, twenty years. I've only tried to stop and all the times I succeed two times to stop for two weeks and I went back because of the stress. So stress. You need the tobacco to quiet me down.

Stress can bring about relapse in smoking behavior.

Then I quit again for two months and I honestly can't even remember why I started. Probably as a coping mechanism for something that was going on in my life.

Boredom or anxiety can play a role in smoking. Something to do.

When I go on my break I'll be bored because I've always smoked on my breaks and if I don't smoke on my break then I have no idea what I'm going to be doing with that 15 minutes or half hour.

Alcohol and other substances are often used in conjunction with cigarettes.

usually two cigarette per alcoholic beverage

Drinking. When I drink.

Drinking. Because I started drinking and I was digging around in the ashtray looking for a cigarette. There's no shame in my game. If I ain't got the money and I want a cigarette that bad, I'll go up in there and get mine.

Utah

Salt Lake City

Men's group

Five men participated, the average age was 21 (18-26), most were white and most only had a high school diploma. Three earned less than \$16000 a year and two earned less than \$35000.

Cigarettes are important tools for socializing.

It is a social thing.

Very much so.

Wanna go outside and talk? And then just light up a cigarette. We talked about this earlier.

That's what it's like. Serious.

Good way to meet people.

Yeah.

Like if it's a heavy cloud go over to the smoking balcony and talk to the people over there.

Or if you need a cigarette and you want to make a new friend say, hey, can I bum a smoke off of you and instantly turn into a conversation.

One's social connections can also influence initiation.

First time I tried cigarettes, I used to be...unintelligible, so I came back from my mission I don't go anymore to the church so I came out being who I am, you know, gay. So I met a guy and we started dating and he smoke. So he would like offer me a cigarette and I wouldn't say that I don't smoke or anything so I try the cigarette, but my first time, you know. I didn't, like I said, because he smoke I wanted to learn, I wanted to see how it is and I didn't get used to it. So people that smoke, they feel cool, I feel funny saying that, but there is a commercial saying that, you look cool when you smoke.

I want to say that I grew with my family. My mom smoked a lot. Only thing I noticed when she is mad or nervous or something, when she smoked that controlled her a lot. When I think of all the case that people die because of cancer. I know people in Florida that they died of that. My mom has been smoking forever and some people just don't have that kind of problem, get sick or die. And so how can that cigarette control someone when he's really stressed out. How can a cigarette control that?

But it isn't even work, its just walking out the door. It's a social habit. I mean Heather was saying today. You get up, you step outside you gotta smoke. That's what you do. You have all your friends and everything and you smoke. Especially if you have roommates, like Heather. That's their thing, before they do anything in the morning, there's always a cigarette. You would have to treat yourself like veal and put yourself in a crate somewhere.

Stress is also associated with smoking.

Boredom is related to smoking.

Something to kill the time. Another thing here at the center, like long periods of no working and your down in the café for three hours just...unintelligible . I'm gonna go out and have a cigarette.

Work stress.

Works really boring, so I go out and smoke as often as possible. Well, working here its so stressful. Oh, my god, it's a nightmare. Creepy people. So the only like relief is like, just like going outside and chain smoking.

Homophobia

Just the stress of dealing with family that doesn't accept you and everything, so you smoke because you're stressed.

Well, all my family back in Texas now but they disowned me when...unintelligible...so I'm stressed out all the time now.

Oh, it's just my step-dad, really, close-minded about everything I do. Tattoos, peircing's, hair, friends. We always get in fights. So a good way to just blow off the whole situation is to walk away from and go have a cigarette. Not much else you do at my house.

They learn to smoke when stressed by watching others.

I want to say that I grew with my family. My mom smoked a lot. Only thing I noticed when she is mad or nervous or something, when she smoked that controlled her a lot. When I think of all the case that people die because of cancer. I know people in Florida that they died of that. My mom has been smoking forever and some people just don't have that kind of problem, get sick or die. And so how can that cigarette control someone when he's really stressed out. How can a cigarette control that?

Depression can have a significant impact upon people's smoking behavior.

The first time I did it was...I was fourteen. That's when I first started. It had a lot to do with depression. A cigarette was like a comfort stick. It was just like, hey, everything's okay. You're taking off the years of my life that really aren't years that were good anyway. Mine was coming out and issues that I had with my family. That life wasn't just... life sucked then. I don't know. I got into smoking, heroine. I was just, I didn't have anything to do. I guess it was like a way out. I kind of fell back on the heroine to try and... I don't think at the time I really thought about it but I think the heroine was definitely a way to end my life. I was waiting for one of those times my body would react bad to it. I figured if heroine wasn't working, why not just add smoking to it so I could get cancer and die.

I ain't crazy now. The only time...I'm a very private person...nothing do I ever let out. The only time I had to go to the doctor was when I was forced by the medical doctors in the emergency room. I finally decided that drugs weren't working, neither were cigarettes so it was time for the razor blade. That was the time I went to the doctor.

Other substances are used along with tobacco.

Many times I want a cigarette while drinking.

...the fun stuff, man, middle school, I did lots of acid, high school I did lots of acid. With acid you need cigarettes, if you're smoking weed you need cigarettes, if you're drinking you need cigarettes. When somebody says you want to smoke this and you find out half way through that its not acid, you're never going to find out what you were smoking, you definitely need a cigarette.

Smoked a bowl, ran out of weed and just said hey, this will pop up your high and you're like, yeah, yeah.

Cigarettes have a distinct taste and affect that attracts people to different brands.

The really good cigarettes, not trashy ones you buy at the supermarket or places like that but, you know, get yourself some nice _, they're smooth, chocolaty taste.

You actually get quite a taste for them. You start craving the taste of cigarettes.

It's all in the taste. Because Marlboro cigarettes, no matter what you get are going to taste different than Camels. Marlboro, is always, no matter how light it is, its' just always got a little bit more, it's a little harsher taste, a little more feel. If you like smooth and you just want something to sit and relax you go with Camels. If you like the harder cigarettes, if you like the burn, you want to go with the Marlboro and that's just the...the person has what they like more.

Between gay men and lesbians, gay men were thought to be the ones the smoke more.

I think they definitely smoke more than lesbians. I just judge from the amount of people just outside. There are a lot of lesbians that do smoke, I'm sure. You can compare on a Sunday when the whole downstairs is filled with lesbian and there's like six or seven outside smoking to any time there's...like all the guys are outside smoking.

But even at that. We even have the six lesbians that smoke in the morning and every gay man for the rest of that day is a smoker. So I bet you I have six in the morning and I have twenty gay men that come in the rest of the day. Gay men definitely smoke more than lesbians. Women are smarter and deal with problems better.

Between gay men, it's the older men that are perceived to be the ones that smoke more.

No, I don't think that our age group is bad. I think the older gay men smoke more. They never leave the out back smoking area. they light their next cigarette with the one that they still have that's only half done because they want double fix.

San Antonio

Men's focus

Six men participated; they were on average 4 years of age (19-58) and predominately white (one Hispanic). Most have some college education (one only had a high school diploma) and two earned less than \$16,000, three earned less than \$35,000, and 1 earned less than \$80,000 a year.

Smoking has an important role in meeting others.

I've been going to clubs since November and I've always noticed that it's always the really cute guy with his shirt off and all sweating and everything and smoking a cigarette. I've had a bunch of people all walk up to him. I'll light one then they'll take a drag off of it and then give it back to me and everything. It's just that eye contact and just that chemistry and all that.

I think part of is, I don't know as much now as when I first started, I fit in with the rest of the group. There's a positive. In high school I wasn't a popular kid and so when I went into the military and I smoked when I was out with the guys it was always more...it was positive because I was able to mingle in because I did smoke. They'd say do you want a cigarette and I'd say yeah and then you'd become friends.

Other smokers can influence people's smoking behaviors.

So what do you think contributes to your tobacco use?
Being around other people who smoke and my addiction to it.

Stress also influences people's smoking behavior, not necessarily anything specific.

Yeah, now. What really makes you want to grab a cigarette and light up?
Stress. I usually...if I get too high blood pressure, you know, something really piss me off, I usually go smoke a cigarette and calm down. Or if things are just bothering me too much I just go have a cigarette. That's one of the main things.

Well, like I said, when I used to go through all that abuse when I was younger, it was always good because I have a very violent temper when I get that way. I'm to the point where I can notice the signs when I really get that way. Just by going off and smoking a cigarette, it helps bring my blood pressure down and helps lower my emotions and everything like that. So that could kind of be positive in a way because it saves me from going off and doing something stupid.

Boredom also influences cigarette use.

But just like sitting around the house there's like nothing else to do so I smoke a cigarette.

Cigarettes are also used in conjunction with other substances.

Cigarettes and coffee are my two...whenever I have coffee I have a cigarette.

This person's comments combine the social with the combination of coffee and smoking and the affect of stress/boredom (six hours in an emergency room).

And so there's literally a coffee shop on every corner. It's like a 7-11. So I would hang out with all the kids that go to college and everybody's horsing around drinking their mocha lattes, cappuccino's, and frappuccino's and all this other stuff and I would just light up a cigarette. A lot of people I hung out with... I mean, now...if there's a cigarette available and if I look at it and I want one, I'll smoke it. If there's none available and I want one... like yesterday, I spent six hours in the emergency room and I wanted a cigarette after I got out of there. I'm like, I am pissed. I'm like, ok, I don't have one, I really don't need one. It just kind of goes hand in hand like that and I just totally lost my train of thought on that. It'll come back.

Young people will have various ways of getting cigarettes. It sometimes takes the form of harm reduction.

That's another thing. Because my mother, she was always like I don't care if you drink, I don't care if you do drugs, I don't care if you smoke as long as you do it in the house. If you do it where I know that your safe if something happens, fine. So she'd buy me cigarettes, she'd buy me a carton and that would last me two weeks. I would have friends come over at like two o'clock in the morning, I'm out of cigarettes, can I buy one off of you. I had friends at school, I'll give you twenty-five cents for a cigarette. I just had people coming up to me because they knew that I could get it and they wanted it.

Work may influence in addition to aiding in the initiation of cigarette use.

I started when I was eighteen. Basic training. They would give me fifteen minutes if I smoked a cigarette to have a break, otherwise, I would get five minutes to go down and make a phone call. So I started smoking so I could be able to go down and hang out and get more time out of the barracks. That's when I first started smoking. I stopped for like a year and then I started going out, you know, I had friends who all went out to the clubs and just started up smoking again. That was '81, '82.

Parents have a strong influence on their children.

First time I started smoking was with my best friend. I was ten years old. It was acceptable because my parents smoked. My mother smoked cigarettes, my father smoked cigars. It was like we were being adultish. If that's the word. What else was in there?

There are people that one would avoid if one was quitting. They are primarily those who they perceive who will not provide support to them. Health care providers were identified as individuals who can help them quit.

I would avoid all my family because all my family smoke and they all go, yeah, right you're

going to quit. I mean, my mom, my aunts, my cousins. I keep saying that I'm going to quit smoking and they all say, yeah, right. So I wouldn't go to them.

Who would I go to? Actually, I talked to my doctor and he gave me some Zyban but he said don't start taking till I was psychologically ready to quit smoking. Because he said that until I'm psychologically ready it's not going to do any good. I've got to get psychologically ready. They don't have a psychological patch or nothing.

Sometimes friends can help, but they can only do so much.

I had a couple friends come up to me. I remember one night, my friend Sean and I were sitting at the spot we used to hang out at. He grabs a cigarette, lights it up, smokes about half way, throws it away and says I'm going to quit smoking and throws me a brand new pack of cigarettes. I looked at him and said I'm going to support you, I'm not going to give you a cigarette. But I know that you're going to start smoking again and I'm going to see how long it takes before someone else gives you a cigarette. And I didn't give him a cigarette until someone else gave him a cigarette. And then once I knew that he couldn't quit then I'm just like, well, I'm not going to try to stop from doing something that you're going to do anyway. If you're going to try to stop then I'll support and if not, well, I'll just smoke all your cigarettes.

Gay men were identified as smoking more than lesbians and heterosexual individuals. Alcohol was mentioned as a reason.

What is your perception of lesbian and gay smoking rates in relation to the rest of the population? Which group do you think smokes more and which group do you think smoke less?
Gays.

I think lesbians smoke less than the men.

Yeah, I definitely agree with that.

You just said gays.

Not lesbians, gays.

Gay men smokes way too much.

It's because we're all over obsessed little drama queens running around.

And drink too much.

What's your perception of our smoking rates compared to straights?

Twice the national average.

At least. If not more, I would say four times.

Advertisements (for and against cigarette use) were identified as being a problem. They see a problem with each's credibility.

Ok, the thing is, see, advertising is so totally bogus, so totally deceptive or unreal because they never...well for ages, they wouldn't show anybody smoking in an office and yet everybody's oh, it's acceptable to smoke in the office. But the ads were not showing that. The ads might show a few people together but they don't show the ash trays. There's never an ash tray or cigarette butt

in the ad. There's never even a wisp of smoke in most of the ads. You don't have any clue about the odor and how socially unacceptable. I hate it.

They don't want to have the negative condemnations...

One thing I hate about advertising are the truth commercials. I hate those commercials.

The what?

The truth commercials. Ok, I can understand their views and their opinions on it. But on most of their commercials. Like the one where they're throwing all the body bags in front of the offices. I mean, it's ok to express your opinion as long as you don't shove it down someone's throat. And on some of their commercials, that's what it seems like they're doing. I mean, I've seen some smoking advertisements that are just like, basically, it's the Marlboro. All it is, it's the red line, the white with the picture of the cowboy, the other red line that says Marlboro. Then it has some little slogan and then the surgeons generals warning. That's not saying go out and smoke, it's saying don't go out and smoke. but with some of the truth commercials, it's like I said the body bag one, it's like, this is how many people that died from smoking your cigarettes. I mean, what proof do they have that it was that brand of cigarettes. I just hate the fact that it seems like they're shoving it down your throat.

Smoking is used to help control one's moods.

It was like what I was saying about gays. That gay men are the ones who smoke the most. Whenever I go into the chat rooms, I have like two things. I'm either Dear Abbey or soap opera watching. Whenever there's drama in there, I'm like...I literally type in there oh god let me go pop some popcorn, get a beer and smoke a cigarette. I'll literally sit there because whenever I go on line I'll literally sit there all night. And so I'll literally sit there and if one of my friends is having a problem because I know it's going to get stressful so I'll start chain smoking. And when there's drama, I'll literally just sit there and smoke a cigarette just because if I don't have something else to concentrate on I'm going to laugh my ass off so hard that I'll fall off the chair and I've done that before.

HIV brings about additional issues in regards to cessation.

Especially with people that are dealing with other health issues, you know, HIV, AIDS, stuff like that. They smoke and besides all the meds they got to take then they smoke. A lot of time, because they have HIV it is a stressful time in their lives and I think that's when they smoke more. And then taking Zyban, they're already taking twenty pills a day and have them take...people say oh, it's just one more. But some people who have been taking it four, five, ten years. Since about 1991 is when they started with AZT. To them, they're like, one more pill. One more pill makes a difference.

I can attest to the whole HIV thing. I don't have it. At least I hope I don't. But when I went to go get tested the other day. My two friends were there for moral support and they kept yelling at me to slow down and I literally did not stop walking or speed walking until like three blocks from the building. And I was just like this and everything and the first person I saw I'm like, can I have a cigarette please. That was the only way I could calm my nerves down because I...pretty much, not knowing isn't as bad as waiting. I have to wait like three weeks before I know

anything. So this is a really stressful time.

The expense of products to help people quit were mentioned by participants.

I wish patches were cheaper.

And then of course the people on disability, they can't afford...because a lot of the insurances won't pay for the Zyban or the Wellbutrin. I know you can get Zyban and the Wellbutrin, which is for depression. Sometimes the insurance will cover that but not the Zyban. So you just have to tell them you have mental problems. It's terrible that you have to lie to the medical bills but sometimes you have to do that to get what you need.

One of the main reasons is that Zyban, when it is prescribed as Zyban, it's much more expensive than when it's prescribed as Wellbutrin.

I think that the tobacco company should be forced to help people not smoke cigarettes if they want to...someone like myself. They should be required by law to make a product that will help me not be addicted to nicotine. Just like they're making products that has helped me to be addicted and they knew about it.

The community works done by tobacco companies where not seen as being sincere.

And Phillip Morris has all these ads about how good they are to the community.

All the good things they do to the...

You have Phillip Morris and Kraft and several other companies are all conglomerates.

I don't buy any Kraft, Nabisco. I don't buy any of it.

Women's group

Seven women participated in the focus group; they were 47 years of age on average (27-62) and somewhat split by ethnicity (3 Hispanic and 4 white). Most have some college experience (One had a high school diploma, and four earned less than \$50,000 and one earned less than \$35,000 and one earned less than \$16,000 a year.

Drinking and stress were identified as major influences in one's smoking behavior.

What do you think are occasions when people smoke or use tobacco?

Drinking.

Alcohol or when you're stressed.

Or nervous.

Nervous, drinking stress.

Breaking up.

Alcohol or boredom.

Usually they start because they were bored and they drank a lot of alcohol and then they go to parties.

The influence of stress can be very ironic at times. The cognitive leap from cause to affect can be sidetracked by other factors like stress.

It was very sad when my stepfather was in the hospital dying from lung cancer from having smoked. All these people were outside on the porch, including his daughter, who resumed smoking because of the stress of him being sick. It was ironic. Several people puffing away because he had problems.

There is a social component to initiation, in how it will influence their social image. Rebellion (risk taking) being an important component.

They start when they're young and they think that it looks sexy. It gives them a lot of confidence to have it.

I think it's about image, I think when your young it's about that image. Being rebellious or I'm different.

No, most people I know that started smoking young is because their parents smoked.

I think a lot of it, too is if people tell you not to smoke. I think a person is going to smoke. As a child just like my mother said that I had to be eighteen to smoke. Well, we tried to smoke everything. Grass, whatever.

I think it's about image, I think when your young it's about that image. Being rebellious or I'm different.

Family can influence people's smoking.

No, most people I know that started smoking young is because their parents smoked.

Work may create an environment that may influence your decision to begin smoking.

I know people when I was in the army they would smoke on purpose because it was the only time they would get a break. Because if you weren't a smoker you couldn't take a smoke break. The only time you'd get a break is if you went for a smoke break because that was the only thing that was allowed. So people would just go outside and just start.

Tobacco is used to help people relax.

I personally smoke a pipe. I think it's extremely relaxing to me. I don't smoke that much. But I think it's very relaxing and I think that being 62 that's an enjoyment in life that I won't stop. It was just an enjoyment with me. Even today

Smoking can affect your senses.

I used to smoke and I quit and what I've noticed not smoking is that you taste your food better. When you smoke everything's just kind of the same. You have the cigarette taste all the time

People's initiation occurred for various reasons, but generally involves social reasons (image, rebellion), and alcohol.

So those of you, who have smoked, think about the first time that you smoked. What led you to smoke?

My mother.

I was drunk.

Turning eighteen.

Because I had fifteen minutes to get to school and we all ducked behind school to have a cigarette and be cool.

It was an identity thing. You know being with a crown that was daring. Fitting in feeling. Confidence.

I was hanging around with a bunch of Indonesian guys and they smoked like chimneys.

Mine was to prove a point. My mother said that girls in the family couldn't smoke until they were eighteen. The boys sixteen. So when I turned eighteen I went down and bought all kinds of cigars, cigarettes and smoked them in the house. I was sick as a dog. I never touched a cigarette since. I was being resentful.

For me, I was drunk.

Quitting is perceived as an individual issue, that outside pressures cannot make you quit. You have to have the desire and the wants to quit. Just like with liquor. I used to drink tremendous amounts. I almost became an alcoholic. But nobody told me not to drink or anything else. I just one day had enough. I said that is it and I haven't had a drink in four years. And I still to this day I can think about it and I get upset in the stomach just thinking about it. But you have to say it to yourself.

Not everybody can utilize the same method of quitting. Patches for example may not be dosed at a level that can be useful for everybody.

Not everybody can wear the patch. I had every single adverse reaction to the patch and I don't smoke much at all. I put the patch on and I was about to vomit because there was too much nicotine. My arm is itching. Sicker than a dog. I was like, damn, cigarettes aren't even that painful

Support is seen as coming from sources other than friends and family.

Who would you look to for support?

Yourself. The only other thing you can do is stop hanging around with your smoker friends. I pray to God to give me the strength, that's number one. I wouldn't stay away from friends or anything. I would trust in God. I'd ask His support.

Alcohol is a strong trigger for smoking that people will attempt to avoid if quitting. Coffee and other smokers are also triggers.

So who would you avoid? Somebody mentioned that they would avoid maybe people that smoke. The bar.

The bar in particular.

Pick up a beer you want a cigarette. Or if not a shot. Coffee and cigarettes. Beer and cigarettes. Smokers and cigarettes.

There are those individuals who will take a very individualized approach toward quitting.

I wouldn't avoid anything. But the fact is if I'm enjoying something I keep enjoying. I go back to self.

If you want to be strict, though, you want to stay away from things that are going to tempt to from...

No, the mission in life is something you have to correct.

Self motivation.

Alcohol and friends have a strong influence on people's smoking behavior.

I think the one thing that had me smoking the most was when I was with friends that drank a lot. The more I drank the more I smoked. If I didn't hang around the people I knew that drank all the time it eliminated that need or temptation out of my day and the day just went on.

People may respond negatively to some anti-smoking messages.

I think I would avoid anyone who would push the subject. Preaching to you about you shouldn't be smoking, blah, blah, blah. I'd turn around and go right out and have a cigarette. I would avoid people who are trying to preach to you about what you should do and shouldn't do.

Stress plus opportunity may lead to relapse/use.

My roommate. She was always there smoking. I've quit like...the longest I've quit is a year and then she would be there huffing and puffing. Then I'd like break up with somebody or something and then I would be like, fuck it, give me one.

Measures may have to be taken in order to reduce the temptation for use. Money is also seen as a motivation to quit.

When I used to smoke more. But now, no, I try to stay away from all that business. As a matter of fact, I told her that if she was going to smoke in the house that she had to hide all her cigarettes. I just got tired of seeing them around. So I just keep on putting more pressure on her and stuff. I just see it as an incredible waste of cash. For me, it's all about cash flow.

Some individuals have a fatalistic belief system and would be resistant to health related messages.

That's what they say.

When you drink they say the same thing.

You're going to die anyway, so why not just enjoy it.

Los Angeles

Eleven men and women participated, all were Latino/as. Eight participants were men and three were women (1 transgendered/transsexual woman). The average age of the group was 30 (ranging from 18-65). Five people have a high school or equivalent degree, three have some college, and one did not complete high school (2 didn't answer the question). Nine of the participants earned less than \$16,000 a year, and two earned less than \$35,000 a year.

Participants identified social aspects to smoking, namely being cued to smoke by other smokers.

When you're at a club with friends. Social smoking.

Usually when you're around people that smoke you tend to smoke more. You tend to start smoking. You feel like they're doing it so you want to do it as well.

There is also a belief about the image of smoking.

Smoking's really cool.

You look cool.

The image of smoking, or the chemical effects of smoking may relate to how an individual views himself or herself.

I would talk to myself. Even though I'm eighteen now I still have, when I'm trying to quit smoking I'm like if I stop smoking I'm not going to be sexy anymore. I know it's not true but that's just the way that I automatically think when I'm trying to quit. I'll go two days without smoking, I won't get out of my room because I just feel so nasty and I look awful and then as soon as I smoke a cigarette, I'll take a shower and put on some make-up and boy I look sexy. That's just the way it is for me.

I was smoking because of the commercials I was watching. The magazine articles. They had these pretty little girls smoking cigarettes and I thought, hey, it makes people kind of hot. And seriously, that was why I started smoking. I was ten years old and I had a finger in my mouth and I was like I feel sexy

Cessation practices also can influence one's perception of oneself.

And the patches. I don't like the patches. It makes me feel like I'm a freak or something. If you have to wear something to quit smoking it's like your out of place like your weird or something. You should be able to...unintelligible...but it doesn't happen that way.

In addition to the actual image of smoking, smoking is used to control weight and there is a reluctance to quit because of the fear of getting fat.

The way I look at it if you stop smoking and you get fat, the way your mind probably thinks that if I start smoking again then I'll get thin again. That's why people can't stop smoking because they see people that stop smoking get fat and they don't want to get fat. When I was little...not little but a couple years ago when I started smoking I was really really fat. Now that I smoke I'm a twig and I like it, too. I don't want to get fat.

Do you think this has anything particular to do with the gay, lesbian, transgender...?

Image.

It's about image. Because the gay community, bisexual community, lesbian community and transgender community is all based on looks. Believe it or not. You see people walking in those communities but it's always based on if you look good or not. So people are going to smoke. If I want to stay thin to impress that guy without smoking...unintelligible.

I don't think we use cigarettes as a weight loss but I think they use it also as weight control. I didn't start smoking just to lose weight but I keep smoking so that I'm not gaining weight. That's true. I smoke a lot but then again I eat a lot. I eat like four or five servings and I'm still thin. It's cool.

Smoking also has a gendered component.

I think lesbians, maybe think that it's butch.

So you think lesbians look butch?

And it's true because if you see a...that like to be called studs. If they're studs they have to be doing something that looks masculine 24-7. And what's one thing that you can do to look masculine 24-7? What do men do 24-7? Smoke cigarettes. Because I have a person that I live with and she's a stud and she's smoking 24-7. One time I asked her, do you like smoking, why do you smoke? And she's like, because I feel like a man.

Stress is also related to one's smoking.

So what are some of the things that cause you stress?

Ex-boyfriends, payments, friendship.

More addiction.

Work.

Not enough work.

School.

Family.

Relationships.

It's all about the nerves. They make you want to smoke.

I like to smoke when I get stressed out, which is pretty much every hour. When I thinking of a bomb, I pick up a cigarette. I end up smoking anywhere to a pack a day.

It relieves your stress. It makes you feel good.

Stress arising from homophobia is seen as a reason why gay people smoke more than heterosexuals.

Because we have more issues. If you think about it, we have more issues than the straight people. Straight people just have to worry about paying bills and stuff like that. But if you're gay it's because you're momma don't love you, because you're momma threw you out of the house because you're gay, your boyfriend broke up with you. You have a lot more issues in the gay community and lesbian community than you do in the heterosexual community. Whether they like to admit it or not.

No, because they're stressed out. They have more issues to deal with. And when you get kicked out of your house because you're gay and you smoke more.

There are gender difference in smoking rates that are related to stress.

I think women have more things to stress about. Being a woman, being a lesbian I think that's...unintelligible.

Relationship stress is an issue.

My ex-boyfriend. Because he's my nympho. We had a problem and thinking about him being right there next to me and all the problems come into my head. When he comes around, I smoke like two packs a day. I try to keep him away.

Depression is also has a strong affect on smoking.

Depression. That's a big one.

People that I know that are depressed they smoke like chimneys. I'm like, why are you smoking? I don't know but I'm depressed.

Cigarette brands do have an image that people are attracted to. Friends can influence what brand people smoke.

I think there's a friendship thing that contributes to that. The reason that I smoke what I smoke, which is usually Ben & Hedges when I can afford it is because usually people that smoke Ben & Hedges are either old or rich. My crowd of people that I hang out with, they like to portray that image of rich and so we smoke Ben & Hedges because that's what most old rich people do, so we smoke Ben & Hedges. And because we usually smoke the menthol ones even though they're worse than regular cigarette because they crystallize your lungs faster because of the menthol. I like the menthol because it tastes like I'm smoking a candy. I've tried smoking a Marlboro, I tried smoking a Camel and they taste nasty. To me, if I smoke a menthol it's like I'm getting my nicotine but it doesn't taste like nicotine it tastes like candy to me.

I think that mostly, personally, I like smoking Marlboro because of people smoking around me. It just kind of got into that...unintelligible...I started purchasing Camels because they're

cheaper. Initially, I started smoking Marlboro Lights because that's what everybody around me was smoking.

Latino/as tend to access cigarettes originally sold in Mexico. They note a difference between those sold in the US and those sold in Mexico. Price and strength.

Once you go down to...unintelligible...you can get any kind of cigarettes you want for \$2.

They're from Mexico.

Even better, they're stronger.

They're better. The only difference is that they're stronger and in my case I like that. more menthol the better.