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Beyond modeling: Parenting practices, parental smoking history, and adolescent cigarette smoking

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Abstract

This study explored parental beliefs and behaviors designed to convey an antismoking message across levels of self-reported parent and adolescent smoking behavior. Parental self-efficacy, beliefs about smoking, the family relationship, antismoking messages, reactions to smoking, and household smoking rules were explored. Participants were 345 6th, 8th, and 10th graders (50% female; 93% White) and their parents (86% mothers). Beliefs about smoking, parental efficacy, and rules varied across levels of both parental and adolescent smoking. Parents with a history of smoking and parents of adolescents who had tried smoking were less efficacious, held weaker antismoking beliefs, and less often reported household smoking rules. Overall, examining parental behavior across levels of both parent and youth smoking is important. Similarly, parental efficacy, not previously studied in relation to parenting about smoking, may be important to target in future interventions.

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1. Introduction

Parents and the family context play important roles in youth smoking. Both active attempts by parents to deter cigarette smoking with antismoking messages or clear consequences for smoking and more passive familial factors such as the nature of the

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family relationship have consistently been associated with youth smoking (e.g., Biglan, Duncan, Ary, & Smolkowski, 1995; Chassin, Presson, Sherman, Montello, & McGrew, 1986; Cohen & Rice, 1997; Cohen, Richardson, & LaBree, 1994; Doherty & Allen, 1994; Henriksen & Jackson, 1998; Kandel & Wu, 1995; Radziszewska, Richardson, Dent, & Flay, 1996). Adolescents themselves also acknowledge the important role that parents play in providing smoking-related messages (Mermelstein, 1999). Although the evidence for the link between parenting practices and youth smoking is increasing, less is known about how parenting practices vary by parental smoking experiences or by adolescents' own patterns of experimentation.

The purpose of this study was to examine how parenting practices and smoking-related attitudes, along with the family relationship, vary by parental smoking experience and by stage of adolescent cigarette use. The present study goes beyond previous work by considering multiple stages of use for both parents and adolescents, collecting data about parenting practices directly from the parents, rather than examining parental practices based solely on child report (e.g., Henriksen & Jackson, 1998), and simultaneously examining several key family variables. This study also includes the smoking behaviors of adolescents, rather than focusing on early adolescents just entering the early stages of experimentation (e.g., Fearnow, Chassin, Presson, & Sherman, 1998; Jackson & Henriksen, 1997).

There are many ways in which parents can attempt to influence their child's decision to smoke. Parents can attempt to convey antismoking messages to their child overtly, such as by providing antismoking messages, or more covertly, for example, by establishing household antismoking policies. Both overt and covert parental practices have been found to be effective. For example, children and early adolescents who report parental antismoking and antidrug use statements are less likely either to use substances or to report future intentions to smoke cigarettes (Bailey, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1993; Chassin, Presson, Todd, Rose, & Sherman, 1998; Henriksen & Jackson, 1998; Jackson, 1997; Jackson & Henriksen, 1997). Even general communication, in the context of a positive parent-child relationship, is associated with lower rates of alcohol and tobacco use (Cohen et al., 1994; Kafka & London, 1991).

Establishing household rules about cigarette smoking and consequences for using cigarettes is another way to convey antismoking messages to youth. Recent studies have found that home smoking bans are associated with decreased rates of youth smoking (Chassin, Presson, Todd et al., 1998; Farkas, Gilpin, White, & Pierce, 2000; Wakefield et al., 2000). Established consequences of smoking are also important. Jackson (1997) and Jackson and Henriksen (1997) found that a lower expectation of being punished for smoking was related to increased rates of smoking initiation in children. Overall, these studies support the importance of household smoking policies and established consequences for smoking.

Parents' behaviors, such as setting household smoking rules or making antismoking statements, are likely to be a function of their own experiences with smoking, their smoking-related beliefs and attitudes, their confidence in their ability to influence their child's behavior (i.e., their self-efficacy), and the overall family environment. Self-efficacy for parenting, both in general and specific to conveying information about smoking, may affect adolescent smoking directly and affect a parent's antismoking socialization practices. Parental self-

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