

Mother-Daughter Communication: A Protective Factor for Nonsmoking

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Background

- Tobacco is the leading cause of mortality in the U.S.
 - 435,000 deaths annually
 - \$157 billion each year in smoking health-related costs

- In tobacco producing states such as Virginia, elevated lung cancer death rates are attributed to the high prevalence of smoking.

(CDC, 2002; Mokdad, Marks, Stroup & Gerberding, 2004)

Rural Adolescent Female Tobacco Use

- Rural adolescent females living in tobacco-producing regions are at-risk for smoking initiation rates equal to those of boys
 - In 2005 the prevalence of lifetime cigarette use was nearly equal between boys (55.9%) and girls (52.7%).
 - In 2005 7.2% of high-school females had smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days.

- Adolescent female smokers are at increased risk for smoking related diseases, reproductive and pregnancy problems.

(CDC, 2006; Matheson & Meszaros, In Press)

Mother-Daughter Communication and Tobacco use

- Teens in caring and supportive families who have open communication with their parents are:
 - Less likely to abuse substances, and
 - Have lower levels of cigarette use.
- Parents can effectively discourage tobacco use or progression of use by talking with their children about risks.
- The better the quality of parent-child communication the less likely adolescents are to smoke.

(Distefan et al., 1998; Harakeh, Scholte, Vries, & Engels, 2005; McArdle et al., 2002)

Purpose and Objectives

- The purpose of this study was to investigate family communication as a protective factor related to not smoking in African American (AA) and Caucasian American (CA) female adolescents residing in two rural, tobacco producing counties in a southern state.
 - Evaluate specific protective factors for not smoking related to mother-daughter communication in adolescents living in tobacco producing regions.
 - Explore approaches to enhance protective mother-daughter communication patterns in the development of a youth prevention project.

Description of Youth Participants

	AA (n=6)	CA (n=12)
Age (\pm SD)	16.5 (0.548)	16.33 (0.651)
9-10 grade	0	1
11-12 grade	6	11
Practicing religion	6	9
Grades (% "B" or higher)	6	11
Parent education (college or higher)	4	3
Parents who smoke	2	6
Siblings who smoke	3	4
Friends who smoke	6	6
Ever tried smoking	3	5
Will try in next 12 mos.	1	0
Ever used other tobacco	0	1

Methods

- Data were collected using a semi-structured protocol and group interview method.
- Interviews were conducted with four separate groups of AA and CA female adolescents who never tried or had experimented with smoking and AA and CA mothers.
- Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.
- Content analysis and procedures to assure qualitative rigor were used to identify, code, and categorize patterns in the data
- University of Virginia and Virginia Tech IRB approved the study procedures.

Adolescent Interview Questions

- ❑ *What makes it easy for you to be a nonsmoker?*
- ❑ *What are some good (or bad) things about being a nonsmoker?*
- ❑ *Who are the people who approve of you not smoking?*
- ❑ *Was there a time in your life when you knew you were going to be a nonsmoker?*
- ❑ *If you were going to design a (smoking prevention) program, what would it look like?*

Parent Interview Questions

- *What do you think has influenced your daughter's decision on whether or not to smoke cigarettes?*
- *Which of those influences you just mentioned would you say have had the most impact?*

Findings

- Cross-cutting themes emerging as protective factors from the youth and parent group interviews were:
 - Frequent and open communication about smoking
 - Mothers' intentionality in messages about non-smoking
 - Mothers' clear testimony about the dangers and risks of smoking
 - A repeated pattern of oversight of daughters' activities and friends
 - Mothers' pride in their daughters'
 - A close knit family of support
 - Daughters' explicit desire not to disappoint parents

Frequent and Open Communication about Smoking

- "... everyday we talk about things that happens everyday."
- "... I know how it was in high school and all the peer pressure and then they have time to slip into the bathroom before they get to the next class and so that's really when I started talking to her."
- "... talk to my daughter everyday about things such as smoking, drinking and trying to, you know, not let other people to influence them on doing some of those things, because like she ... said, in the long run it's bad for your health."

Mothers' Intentionality in Messages about Nonsmoking

- "You know you gotta stay on top of things and that's what I try to do. I try to stay on top of things with my daughter..."
- "... later on when they get older and in school, that thing is just changed and so much worse and the peer pressure and stuff and so it's a good policy to always just stay involved in your children's life in school. Even if they don't come and talk to you ... still be involved and ask them what kind of day and stuff because the subjects will eventually come up, whether it's smoking or anything else and so we're better to try to lead then guide ..."

Mothers' Clear Testimony about the Dangers and Risks of Smoking

- "My daughter has tried it the one time but I work in healthcare. So, I'm all the time coming home and saying, '*you know, you've seen nanny, you've seen papa ... with their health problems. You see how my breathing is. Let me tell you about little miss so-and-so or ... uncle so-and-so that was here in the hospital.*' Things that I've seen in healthcare, I try to pass it on to explain."

A Repeated Pattern of Oversight of Daughters' Activities and Friends

- "Because when there's ballgames, I'm there. I'm close by. I don't, like some of the parents, just drop 'em off and say, *'I'll be back here at ten o'clock to pick you up'*... No, we're right there and if we're at the ballgame I'm like, *'You don't have to sit with me but you have to be somewhere where I can see you and you have to check in every little bit.'*"
- "But my daughter has a certain time to come home. So, she knows if she's not home at that time, she's in trouble."

Mothers' Pride in Their Daughters

- "It made me feel very ... *I was pretty proud of her*, you know, because she has asthma and she don't need to be smoking."
- "I feel good about it because I know that she knows it's not good for her and I don't feel like she'll try it or do it like my family does."
- "Well it *made me feel proud* that, you know, she said it wasn't cool."

A Close Knit Family of Support

- “The way I see it, well, a lot of people come to my house, my mother’s house and they’ll say they’ve never seen people so close... They’ve had people come to the house and they’ll say, *‘Well they’re a close group of people.’*”
- “Well, I live next door to my mother and my sister, she comes over, she lives about fifteen minutes away and she comes over every Sunday.”

Daughters' Explicit Desire not to Disappoint Parents

- "He's kind of verbal because when my brother smokes he kind of gets on to him more like talking about how he likes his money and, you know, well he kind of just jokes around with him but wants him to stop and stuff like that. *I see him a little disappointed with him and I don't want him to be disappointed with me.*"
- "A cousin that's pretty close to me and she started smoking ... she's pretty much like my sister, and *my mom found out and she just said that she was disappointed in her... if she's disappointed in her then I hate to know what she thinks about me if I tried it.*"

Conclusions

- ❑ Despite the prevalence of smoking in rural tobacco-producing counties, AA and CA female adolescents and their mothers identified mother-daughter communication as a protective factor.
- ❑ AA and CA parents participating in the study viewed their daughters' nonsmoking behavior as a direct product of intentional parent-child communication that affirms their family values.
- ❑ Information, motivation, and support may be ways that parents help prevent youth tobacco use.
- ❑ Parental 'pride' may be a factor that facilitates and reinforces open communications.

Future Research

- Directions for research include:
 - Further examination of the nature and type of female adolescents' communication with parents.
 - A parallel study of protective factors of rural male adolescent nonsmokers and non-users of smokeless tobacco.
 - Designing and testing contextually and culturally appropriate parent-child communication interventions for tobacco prevention in rural regions.

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