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Level: Grades 7-9

About the Author

This lesson has been adapted from *Smoke-Free for Life*, a smoking prevention curriculum supplement from the Nova Scotia Department of Health, Drug Dependency and Tobacco Control Unit

Lesson Plan

**Thinking Like a Tobacco Company:
Grades 7–9**

Overview

In this lesson, students learn how the tobacco industry targets the needs, wishes and desires of young people in order to sell cigarettes. Students begin by looking at the reasons why the tobacco industry needs to recruit “replacement” smokers. Then they assume the roles of marketing personnel in a tobacco company and use a 1987 youth survey conducted by R. J. Reynolds Tobacco to create their own marketing campaigns to sway various sub-groups within the youth demographic.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- an understanding of how the tobacco industry uses psychological data to profile and market cigarettes to specific target audiences
- an awareness of how the tobacco industry downplays the health risks associated with smoking
- an awareness of how advertisers use specific strategies to target youth
- an understanding of why the tobacco industry needs to recruit replacement smokers

Preparation and Materials

- For ideas on how to conduct discussion groups on this topic, see *Guidelines for Peer-Led Discussion Groups*, on the sidebar.

Photocopy the following student handouts:

- *Recruiting the Replacement Smoker*
- *Number of Deaths in Canada Caused by Smoking*
- *Why We Need Replacement Smokers*
- *R. J. Reynolds Report*

Make photocopies or overheads of the following ads, or use these as examples for finding similar ads in magazines:

- *Advertisements for Young Smokers*
- Have large sheets of paper ready for brainstorming.

Procedure

Class Discussion/Role-Play

Tell your students to imagine that they work in the marketing branch of a large multinational tobacco company, and they have been called to a meeting to figure out how the company can sell more cigarettes and increase its profits.

As the marketing vice-president, you begin the meeting by giving a “pep talk.” Like most executives leading a meeting, you have visual aids to help you get your point across.

Assume the role of ad executive. Use the overhead projector.

Suggested Script:

“The good news is that, even though we’re getting bad press about all the health problems caused by smoking, people keep lighting up! Every time someone lights up one of our cigarettes, that’s about one cent profit for us. It may not sound like much, but for each pack-a-day smoker, that adds up to about \$70 a year. In Canada, there are about 6 million smokers, representing about \$420 million profit annually. So every smoker that chooses our brand is precious to us. We need them – and because they’re addicted, they need us.”

Show *Number of Deaths in Canada Caused by Smoking*.

“Now, the bad news is that our customers are dying off like flies. That’s the problem when one’s product causes heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and emphysema – to name a few of the unfortunate side effects.”

Show *Why We Need Replacement Smokers*.

“The other bad news is that once people realize they’re killing themselves when they smoke, they get it into their heads that they should quit. We call these smokers “pre-quitters.” At any one time, about 16 per cent of smokers are trying to quit. Only about 10–12 per cent of those attempts are successful – but still, about 140,000 Canadians do manage to quit each year. This is terrible! What can we do?” (Ask for suggestions.) “What we need are replacement smokers – new smokers, or “starters” to replace the ones who quit or die. Of course, we also want to convince our present customers that they shouldn’t worry about their health. And we want to capture the “switchers” as well – smokers who want to switch brands.

Distribute *Recruiting the Replacement Smoker*. Once students have reviewed it, ask these questions:

- Why are young teens such a desirable target group to our industry?
- What are some advertising campaigns that have proven effective in reaching young people?
- What are some ways that we could find out more about young people?

- What do we need to know about young people in order to better market our products to them?

Distribute *R. J. Reynolds Report* to students.

"Here's a study about Canadian teens that was completed by one of our competitors." Give students some time to review each category, then ask these questions:

- Which is the largest group? What are the traits of this group?
- Which group contains the highest percentage of 15-17-year-olds? What are the traits of this group?
- Which group contains the highest percentage of 18-21-year-olds? What are the traits of this group?
- Which group contains the highest percentage of males? What are the traits of this group?
- Which group contains the highest percentage of females? What are the traits of this group?
- Which group represents the highest percentage of smokers overall?
- Which group are we most likely to successfully market cigarettes to? Why?
- Which group are we least likely to successfully market cigarettes to? Why?
- Showhow the *Advertisements for Young Smokers* – or similar ones, from magazines aimed at young people.
- Which of these groups would each of these ads most appeal to? Why?

Activity

"We know our target groups, so now let's sell some cigarettes! Your job is to think up new ideas for getting our message across to each target group. Think of images that will really "grab" your target audience. Who should be in your ads, and what should they be doing?"

- Divide the class into seven groups. Assign each a target group from the *R. J. Reynolds Report*.
- As this report was created in the mid-1980s, ask students to update the profile of their group (i.e. "Big City Independents" might listen to rap or hip hop music; "T.G.I.F.'s" might be likely to play video games, etc.)
- Each student group will develop an advertising strategy for their target audience. Students will brainstorm messages (verbal and visual) that will influence their target group. They will also decide which magazines to place their ads in.

- Once a strategy has been developed, students will create a magazine advertisement or campaign.
- As part of their presentation, group members will select a person from their group to represent a young person from their target audience. On the day of the presentation, this person (who will dress and act according to the personality traits described in the study) will be invited by the “advertising team” to provide a brief introduction to the target group they represent. (For example, if the student represents “Big City Independents,” the chosen student would act like a male, aged 18-21, who is single, assertive, not too fashion-conscious, etc.)

Once the presentations are completed, post the group strategies and final advertisements on a bulletin board under the heading “The Target is You.”

Evaluation

- Group presentation, advertising strategies and advertisements.

Related Resources on the Media Awareness Network Web site:

- Guidelines for Peer-Led Discussion Groups
- Thinking Like a Tobacco Company: Grades 4 – 6 (Lesson)

More lessons about tobacco are listed in:

- Teaching About Tobacco: Guidelines for Teachers

Recruiting the Replacement Smoker

What is a “replacement smoker”?

In order for the tobacco industry to continue to reap big profits, it must not only replace quitters with new smokers – it must also replace the estimated four million adults who die each year of tobacco-caused diseases worldwide.

Who does the industry recruit as replacement smokers?

Ninety per cent of smokers begin before the age of 18. Adolescents are the most important customers of cigarette companies. Young smokers represent a lifetime of addiction, and a lifetime of profits.

How can the tobacco industry justify marketing an addictive, lethal drug to young people, especially when kids under the age of 18 or 19 cannot legally buy cigarettes?

- The industry denies it. In the U.S., the industry’s own voluntary Code of Ethics vows that “cigarette advertising shall not appear on television and radio programs, or in publications, directed primarily to persons under 21 years of age.” And more recently, in 1998, under the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA), tobacco companies agreed not to target advertising to youth under 18.

In an advocacy ad entitled “We don’t advertise to children” (U.S. edition of *Time* magazine, April 9, 1984), R. J. Reynolds (RJR), the makers of Camel and Export A cigarettes, countered prevailing accusations that they targeted teens with this reassurance:

All of our cigarette ads are what we call “brand advertising.” Their purpose is to get smokers of competitive products to switch to one of our brands, and to build the loyalty of those who already smoke one of our brands. At the present there are some 200 different cigarette brands for sale in the U.S. Many of them have only a very small fraction of the total cigarette market. Getting smokers to switch is virtually the only way a cigarette brand can meaningfully increase its business. That’s why we don’t advertise to young people.

In fact, smokers tend to be extremely loyal to their brand of choice. Only 10 per cent of smokers’ switch brands each year.

How do we know that the industry deliberately targets youth?

Internal industry documents acknowledge that success in recruiting young replacement smokers is the key to capturing market share.

- A 1971 Matinee marketing plan stated that: “Young smokers represent the major opportunity group for the cigarette industry. We should therefore

determine their attitudes to smoking and health, and how this might change over time.”

- A 1988 Imperial Tobacco marketing plan said: “If the last ten years have taught us anything, it is that the industry is dominated by the companies who respond most effectively to the needs of younger smokers.”
- In 1987, when Canada first passed the Tobacco Product Control Act, which banned cigarette advertising in Canadian print media, the Act’s constitutionality was challenged by Imperial Tobacco and by RJR. During the pre-trial, confidential documents from the marketing files of these two international firms became available for public review.

These documents revealed that both companies went to great lengths to penetrate the psyche of adolescents in order to more effectively target their brands to “starters.” Research techniques included wide-ranging surveys, focus group tests, and closed circuit TV observation. A Youth Target Study conducted in 1987 by RJR identified the “primary target segment” among young people, and noted that they are “. . . rooted in the present. They live for the moment and tend to be self-indulgent. . . . Achievement and leadership is not a goal for this group compared to others. Societal issues are relative non-issues. . . . They read newspapers and some magazines, including *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. Heavy metal and hard rock are common music choices.”

The following observations about teen smokers appeared in a report commissioned by Imperial Tobacco:

Starters no longer disbelieve the dangers of smoking, but they almost universally assume these risks will not apply to themselves because they will not become addicted. Once addiction does take place, it becomes necessary for the smoker to make peace with the accepted hazards.

This is done by a wide range of rationalizations...The desire to quit seems to come earlier now than before, even prior to the end of high school. In fact, it often seems to take hold as soon as the recent starter admits to himself that he is hooked on smoking. However, the desire to quit, and actually carrying it out, are two quite different things, as the would-be quitter soon learns.

(cited in Pollay, see sources below)

- An R. J. Reynolds document from 1989 specifically identifies young people as “the only source of replacement smokers.” It notes the importance of young people to the future of tobacco industry profits, acknowledging that less than one-third of smokers start after age 18, and only 5 per cent of smokers start after age 24. The document also reveals that younger smokers are important to the industry’s future growth – both because they exhibit strong brand loyalty, and because their smoking rates increase as they age.

- It's not only older teens that are targeted. Numerous tobacco industry documents indicate that the industry has perceived kids as young as 13 to be a key market. A 1976 RJR document states:
Evidence is now available to indicate that the 14-18 year-old group is an increasing segment of the smoking population. RJR-Tobacco must soon establish a successful new brand in this market if our position in the industry is to be maintained in the long term.

How do ads target youth?

- Full-page, glossy cigarette ads appear regularly in *Cosmopolitan*, *Vibe*, *Maxim*, *Penthouse*, *Rolling Stone*, *People* and *Sports Illustrated*, among others.
- These ads create and reinforce the image of smoking as cool, acceptable and popular among independent-minded, active, fun-loving people.
- An August 2001 study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* showed that the cigarette companies increased their advertising in youth-oriented magazines after the Master Settlement Agreement. Advertising for the three brands most popular with youth – Marlboro, Camel, and Newport – rose from \$58.5 million in 1998, to \$67.4 million in 1999.



Cartoon ads have the most obvious appeal for young people. Brown & Williamson used a series of tobacco ads that features 'Willie the Kool' penguin, complete with buzz-cut hair, day-glow sneakers, and sunglasses.

Perhaps the most infamous tobacco-based cartoon character is RJR's Joe Camel – a 'smooth character' modeled after both James Bond and Don Johnson of "Miami Vice." A study published in the 1991 edition of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that nearly one-third of three-year-olds were able to match a picture of Joe Camel with cigarettes, and that six-year-olds were able to associate 'Old Joe' with Camel cigarettes as easily as they associated Mickey Mouse with the Disney Channel.



Within four years after the Joe Camel campaign was launched, the number of U.S. smokers under 18 who preferred Camels jumped from less than 1 per cent to 30 per cent of the youth market. Sales of Camel cigarettes to kids 12 to 19 years old rose from \$6 million in 1988 to \$476 million in 1991 – clear evidence that cigarette advertising can have a powerful influence on teenagers.

The campaign also included secondary strategies. One Joe Camel ad published in *National Lampoon* and *Rolling Stone* included a coupon for a free pack of cigarettes with the purchase of another, and advised readers to 'ask a kind-looking stranger to redeem it.' And 'Camel Cash' could be redeemed for youth-oriented 'smooth stuff' featuring the image of Joe Camel. Due to pressure by the American Federal Trade Commission, in 1997 Reynolds agreed to stop using Joe Camel in its tobacco ads. However, subsequent campaigns have featured cartoon-like images of young men and young women, as well as humorous ads that mock the Surgeon General warning labels.

What other promotional strategies target youth?

In countries where cigarette advertising is banned or restricted, the sponsorship of sporting and cultural events becomes a primary means of promoting cigarette brands. In Canada, du Maurier Arts sponsors jazz festivals, Export Extreme sponsors extreme sporting events, Players sponsors tennis tournaments, Rothmans sponsors horse racing, Matinee sponsors fashion design awards, and a number of tobacco companies put the names of their shell companies on auto racing events. The Canadian Tobacco Manufacturer's Council estimated that in 1991, the industry spent more than \$40 million on "cultural programs and projects." The use of the company logo and name on promotional billboards and flyers associates tobacco with popular culture and exhilarating experiences, and links smoking to exciting and glamorous activities and events. Moreover, when these events are televised, the brand name receives wide exposure.

As sponsorship advertising is phased out and tobacco advertising becomes generally more restrictive, advertisers are trying other tactics. The strategy of handing out free cigarettes has been used to recruit new customers worldwide. The activist group INFAC reports these examples: in Eastern Europe, young women in cowgirl outfits hand out free Marlboros to teenagers at rock concerts and discos. Those who accept a light on the spot are rewarded with Marlboro sunglasses. In Taipei, high school students at the Whisky-a-Go-Go disco find free packs of Salem's on each table. At a high school in Buenos Aires, a woman wearing khaki safari gear and driving a jeep with the yellow Camel logo hands out free cigarettes to 15- and 16-year-olds on their lunch break.

Cigarette logos on T-shirts, towels, baseball caps, sunglasses, and jackets give brand names a high profile while giving tobacco companies one more way to circumvent advertising restrictions. Virginia Slims offers a line of "V-Wear." In Kenya, children are given Marlboro T-shirts; and in Thailand, cigarette logos appear on kites, notebooks, earrings, and chewing gum packages.



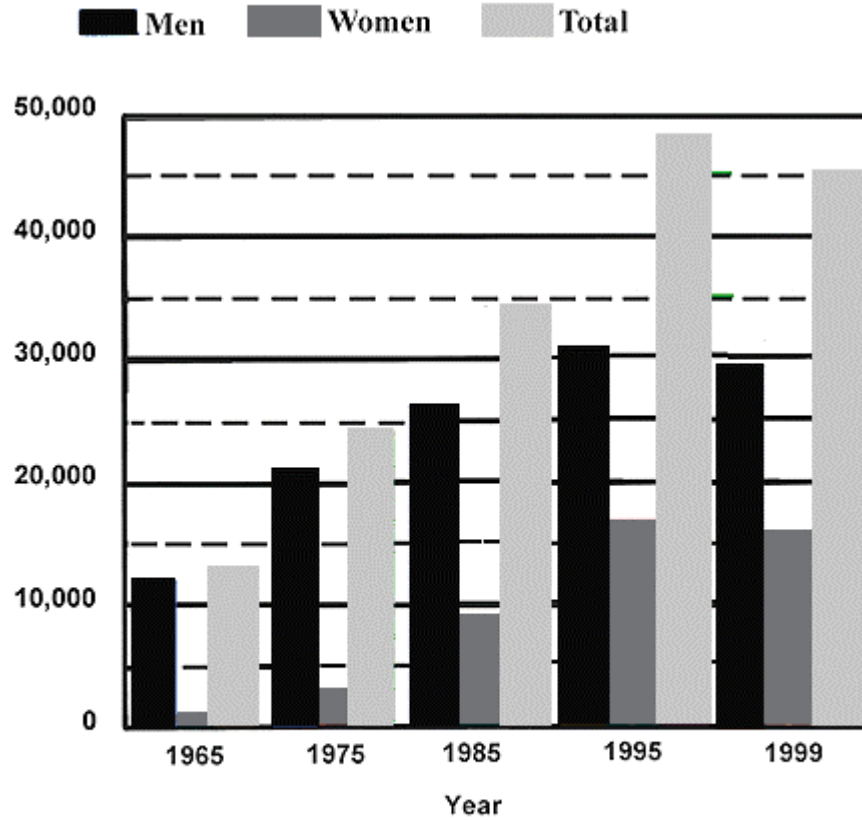
Tobacco companies also support the “alternative press;” offer money to clubs in exchange for displaying tobacco material; and sponsor awards and contests advertised in magazines. Richard Pollay states that “closely associating cigarettes with hip clubs and music venues, and placing advertising in free alternative publications, result in underage teens being exposed to Camel ads... [It] repackages an old message: Smoking is cool.”

Cited in “Tobacco Companies Bankroll Their Own,” *Seattle Times*, Dec. 10, 1997.

Sources:

Youth and Tobacco: Promoting a Lethal Product, National Clearinghouse on Tobacco and Health, 1993.
Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and George Terhanian, “Adolescents’ responses to cigarette advertisements: links between exposure, liking, and the appeal of smoking,” *Tobacco Control Online*, 1998, 7:129-133.

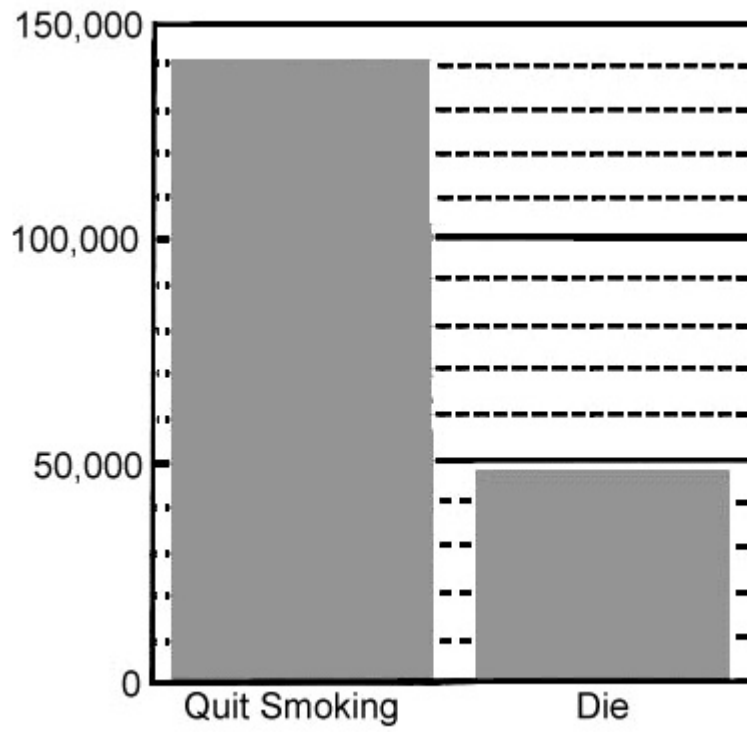
Number of Deaths in Canada Caused by Smoking



Source: "Tobacco: The Facts" (Canadian Council on Smoking and Health) and Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada

Why We Need Replacement Smokers

Number of smokers "lost" each year in Canada:



R. J. Reynolds Report: Youth 1987: Benchmark Study and Key Lifestyles/Values Groups



In 1987, the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company conducted an extensive survey of Canadian youth between the ages of 15 and 24. The goal of this survey was to give the company a better understanding of the values, lifestyles and smoking behaviour of Canadian young people – in order to better target this desirable demographic.

The first half of the survey comprised a self-completed questionnaire that determined how young people felt about social roles, self image, relationships, values, interests, work ethics, ambition, politics, brands, music, forms of advertising, and their media behaviour. The

questionnaire also included questions about the respondents' financial status and spending habits.

The second half of the survey consisted of interviews in which young people were asked about their smoking habits, and which tobacco products and brands they used.

In the final report, young people were classified under the following groups: Big City Independents, Tomorrow's Leaders, Transitional Adults, Quiet Conformers, "T.G.I.F." (Thank God It's Friday), Underachievers, Social Moralists, and Small Town Traditionalists. The profiles for these groups are as follows:

Big City Independents (5% of total survey group)

"You should look after yourself first, and then worry about others."

Big City Independents are at one extreme. This group is oriented towards material success and its members tend to be the most self interested and self-sufficient. The focus is on individual accomplishment and achievement.

- 60% of Big City Independents were male and 40% were female
- Age range within this group:
 - 15 – 17 = 34%
 - 18 – 21 = 45%
 - 22 – 24 = 31%
- Percentage of Big City Independents who smoke: 18%

Personality Traits

- Assertive and independent
- self-centred and self-interested
- There is a lack of parental ties

- Come from diverse backgrounds
- Achievement-oriented, decisive
- Not particularly fashion-conscious
- Believe in equality of sexes
- Not particularly socially concerned
- Light viewers of TV
- Eclectic musical tastes – from classic, reggae and jazz, to more popular youth-oriented music
- Come from larger provinces, often single
- Enjoy books and newspapers
- Generally look down on smoking

Tomorrow's Leaders (11% of total survey group)

"I feel I am in control of my life."

These are certainly potential movers and shakers. They are gregarious and assertive, clear in their direction and oriented toward achievement and success. However, they also demonstrate a degree of independence, both in terms of family ties and in their enjoyment in spending money. In this respect they are prime consumers, especially for fashion items and sporting equipment and accessories.

- 58% of Tomorrow's Leaders were male and 42% were female
- Age range within this group:
 - 15 – 17 = 38%
 - 18 – 21 = 40%
 - 22 – 24 = 22%
- Percentage of Tomorrow's Leaders who smoke: 8%

Personality Profile

- Gregarious, assertive, independent
- Active in sports
- Participate in wide range of activities – rock concerts, clubs, public discussions, professional sporting events
- Less socially concerned
- Fashion-conscious
- Majority are young – often students – and anglophone
- Have the most discretionary income of all groups

- Likely to have stocks, bonds and credit cards
- Likely to own "big ticket" items
- Come from upscale, professional families – tend to be living at home
- Enjoy going to movies with friends
- Light viewers of TV (they enjoy sports, comedies, talk shows and dramas)
- Enjoy new wave, pop and rock music
- Avid readers of books and newspapers
- Most despise smoking

Transitional Adults (14% of total survey group)

"I don't spend my money foolishly."

So named because they are older, Transitional Adults are therefore the most likely to be married and living away from home, but this group still contains a majority of singles.

- 37% of Transitional Adults were male and 43% were female
- Age range within this group:
 - 15 – 17 = 11%
 - 18 – 21 = 36%
 - 22 – 24 = 53%
- Percentage of Transitional Adults who smoke: 48%

Personality Profile

- Self-assured
- Less active in sports and community activities, tend to be tied up in their own affairs
- Rely on parents for moral support
- Financially conservative, but have lots of discretionary income
- Likely to have bank accounts, credit cards and cars
- Prefer "easy-listening" or pop music
- Average TV viewers (like soaps, comedies, news and dramas)
- Average readers
- Older, Quebec youth are over-represented in this group
- More females
- Live away from home, working

Quiet Conformers (18% of total survey group)

"I am a listener rather than a talker."

"Average" is the key term to describe Quiet Conformers, who tend to be followers. We look at them as they flow with the trends, taking their cues from Tomorrow's Leaders. Listening rather than talking characterizes this group. It's not that they don't have an opinion – it's just that they would rather avoid controversy, so are unlikely to express their views publicly.

- 44% of Quiet Conformers were male and 66% were female
- Age range within this group:
 - 15 – 17 = 25%
 - 18 – 21 = 45%
 - 22 – 24 = 30%
- Percentage of Quiet Conformers who smoke: 17%

Personality Profile

- Lack assertiveness and confidence
- Tend to have low discretionary income
- Subscribe to conventional wisdom
- Subscribe to status-quo, regarding equality of sexes and discrimination
- Make conservative music choices
- Mainstream, "average" TV viewers
- Mainstream, "average" readers
- Dress conservatively
- Come from traditional families
- Tend to disapprove of smoking
- Not very active in sports

T.G.I.F. (30% of total survey group)

"It's not important to improve performance year after year."

The largest single group is the underachievers or, the T.G.I.F. group. This segment is rooted in the present. Its members live for the moment and tend to be self-indulgent. Achievement and leadership is not a goal for this group compared with others. Societal issues are relative non-issues. There is a tendency toward extravagance.

The survey noted that understanding this group, because of its size, is quite important to the identification of broadscale marketing activities and dissemination of policies.

- 60% of the T.G.I.F. group were male and 40% were female
- Age range within this group:
 - 15 – 17 = 28%
 - 18 – 21 = 43%
 - 22 – 24 = 29%
- Percentage of T.G.I.F. group who smoke: 62%

Personality Profile

- Don't care very much about social issues
- "Live for today" philosophy
- Self-indulgent
- Outgoing and fashion conscious
- Like to spend money
- Like hard rock, heavy metal music
- Average TV viewing
- Diverse family backgrounds
- Read newspapers and some magazines, although the magazines they read tend to be for entertainment
- Most likely to support smoking

Insecure Moralists (17% of total survey group)

"I feel I have to prove myself to others."

Following the TGIF group and its orientation to the present moment, Insecure Moralists relate more to the perceived values of their parents' generation. They support the idea of traditional families, and to a degree, feel that the best values stem from their parents' time. They have a certain nostalgia for things past and are somewhat uncomfortable with today's society and its values. They feel that "Big Brother is watching over them" and that life in general is threatening. As a consequence they are closely allied with their families and most comfortable with the known and familiar.

- 49% of Insecure Moralists were male and 51% were female
- Age range within this group:
 - 15 – 17 = 37%
 - 18 – 21 = 42%
 - 22 – 24 = 21%
- Percentage of Insecure Moralists who smoke: 36%

Personality Profile

- Experience life as somewhat threatening
- Tend to be insecure and indecisive
- Introspective, most comfortable with what is known and familiar
- Least likely to have a driver's license
- Concerned with issues such as discrimination, moral values, traditional family roles
- Most likely to be young and from Quebec
- Low discretionary income
- Participate in sports, but not public debate
- Watching pro-sports is common, as is attending church or synagogue, or participating in clubs
- Are fashion conscious
- Majority have mothers who are homemakers
- Broad musical tastes – most likely to enjoy country and western music, as well as ballads
- TV is their primary form of entertainment (comedies, dramas, soap operas)
- Not heavy readers
- One third of this group smokes

Small Town Traditionalists (5% of total survey group)

"Practicing religion is very relevant these days."

The remaining group is the Small Town Traditionalists. This segment is the most conservative and the most religious. Material success is not their leading motivator as it is with the Big City Independents. Spiritual values are held in high esteem. They reject all 'vices' and many of their attitudes could be considered old fashioned. Unlike the self-interested, non-conforming Big City Independents, the Small Town Traditionalists support age-old traditions and institutions and long-established belief systems.

- 41% of Small Town Traditionalists were male and 59% were female
- Age range within this group:
 - 15 – 17 = 18%
 - 18 – 21 = 40%
 - 22 – 24 = 42%
- Percentage of Small Town Traditionalists who smoke: 25%

Personality Profile

- Conservative, religious
- Often come from rural areas and small towns (One half of this group is from Atlantic Canada and the Prairie Provinces)
- Outgoing and confident
- Strong family ties, even when living away from home
- Hard-working, unselfish,
- Against discrimination, sexual freedom, overt sex and violence
- Generally see smoking as an undesirable vice, although one quarter smoke
- Tend to come from upscale backgrounds
- Low discretionary income
- Light TV viewers, usually news
- Most likely group to regularly attend church, mosque or synagogue
- Prefer lighter music
- Enjoy reading news magazines, books, newspapers

Source: University of California Tobacco Control Archives
<http://www.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/mangini/html/p/046/>

Overhead

Table 1

Tobacco Ads That Would Appeal to Young Smokers



