



Why I Smoke: **Sociology of a Deadly Habit**

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Smoking is the number one cause of preventable death in the United States. In the twenty first century everyone knows the harm that smoking can cause and yet people still willingly risk their lives for the habit. I am one of these people. I would not throw myself in front of a bus; I would not take Drano from my kitchen and choose to ingest it. One of human being's greatest instincts is survival. So why do I engage in this life threatening activity?

The question cannot simply be answered in one way. There are physical, biological, social, and psychological reasons for the attraction of cigarettes. For our purposes I will use various sociological theories to understand why smoking has become such a huge force in my life and how society has played a role in this manifestation. Perhaps through researching why I smoke I will be able to see how I can stop.

To people of my generation smoking carried along a million perceptions of what it symbolized. Smoking was cool and sexy. When we used to play house in third and fourth grade part of the game was to make fake cigarettes and pretend we were smokers. One of the most popular candies among my friends was candy or gum cigarettes that our parents would buy us. When my dad was a smoker I used to steal his

packs and throw them away because I was taught in school how bad cigarettes were for you. As I got older and my parents became less and my peers more significant, it mattered more to me what kind of persona smoking illustrated than what I had been taught.

I remember the first cigarette I ever smoked. I was in the seventh grade, twelve years old, behind a tree in my back yard with my best friend. She had smoked before, I hadn't. The girl I was with was a new friend. Until I met her I wasn't much of a rebel; I was more of a drama kid violin player who did what her mother said. This new friend was different from any I'd ever had. When she lit the cigarette and taught me how to inhale, I did not hesitate—as far as I can remember. It was too exciting; doing something I knew I shouldn't. It wasn't about smoking the cigarette, it was about what that symbolized in the life of junior high kids trying to find their place.

I didn't start buying my own packs of cigarettes until the end of eighth grade. It became a pastime, a social event. We'd all go buy cigarettes after school and sit in the woods or at the park, or outside the mall and smoke them together. We'd practice how we smoked and look at ourselves in the mirror. When I was young the anti-smoking campaigns you see today weren't around. We knew it was bad for you but it was still cool. It said something about who you were and almost defined the kind of person or group you fit with. In ninth grade I began to be loyal to a certain brand of cigarettes, Parliament Lights. Despite what common research says I had never even seen these brands advertised before. I started smoking them because it was what all of my friends smoked not because Joe Camel told me to. Throughout my first two years of high school I was still a social smoker and could smoke and quit as many times as I wanted to. The fact of the matter is addiction sneaks up on you.

Nicotine is an addictive substance. Ob-

viously some of the reasoning for my becoming a full fledged smoker had to do with my body's dependence on the drug. At the same time cigarettes are addicting in other ways. I became socialized into and addicted to the smoking lifestyle. After all of my friends would sit down to eat, or when we were bored, upset, needed a break from work, or were drinking at a party, we would smoke a cigarette. It's a social thing. Sitting down with friends, smoking and talking is something that has occupied a great amount of time in my life. Smoking is even a way to make new friends. Asking for a lighter is a great pick up line at a bar. At Orientation before my first year of school I didn't know one single person. The boy sitting across from me at the lunch table said he was getting up to go smoke a cigarette. I went with him, and went with him every time after that, and we are still friends to this day.

Today smoking has become a part of my lifestyle, although I don't see it in the desirably sexy way I used to. Cigarettes have been presented to us very differently ever since the new anti-smoking crusade. Yet I still smoke. I always talk about quitting, but push the idea away—deciding it would be too hard to do now. "I'll wait until I graduate." I see smoking as helping me function almost. It is a part of me. I don't say I *want* to smoke a cigarette; I say I *need* to smoke a cigarette. What is strange about it is that when I am at home, or with family, or in an important place, I will not smoke. In those places I never say I need a cigarette. But for some reason, sitting on my living room couch or in my school's computer lab, I do.

I have many unanswered questions about this habit and hope that soon I will be able to rid myself of it. Perhaps through sociological inquiry I will be able to see how exactly society has influenced me to become a smoker. By becoming conscious of the reasons for which we do things it is also possible to become aware of reasons why

we should stop.

Phenomenological sociology views the world from the point of view of the acting subject. It seeks to explain how the world is given meaning. It follows a social process of how things become **externalized, objectified, and internalized**. So in the case of smoking cigarettes I would start by smoking with my friends, then start to see smoking with my friends as a prearranged process that I simply take part in, and finally internalize that socialization so much that it becomes a part of my life. Smoking cigarettes then has meaning to me in a social sense. Through **reification** I would forget that I initiated the creation of my smoking and see it as something separate from me, imposed on me by outside forces. This process comes about because our world is **intersubjective**, or shared. When we share experiences with others they become real. Through face to face interactions we get an idea of who we are by the way others react to us. So if people in our close group react positively to smoking, we will come to see ourselves as smokers and think of this as a desirable trait. The fact that smoking begins and is fostered by social relationships is what makes it such a concrete part of our lives—because social relationships are what society is made of and how it becomes real. Phenomenology also explains why we are not affected so much by the risks of smoking. The main and most imposing part of our consciousness is the **here and now**—what is going on directly around us at a specific time. Things that are in further concentric zones related to time and space do not affect us as much directly. Because the risks associated with smoking are long-term and the benefits are short-term we are more prone to associate with the benefits.

Now that it is understood that social interaction associated with smoking aids in its creation we must see why smoking becomes part of our social interactions. In society we use **symbols** to ascertain the

meanings of each other's actions. This is what is studied by **symbolic interactionism**. The human being can act towards himself; he can see what demands are placed upon him socially, interpret them, and decide how to react to them. This is done by taking on the attitudes of the generalized other. The individual acts according to how he wants the **generalized other** to react to him. In order to call upon the desired attitudes of others we must present ourselves in a way that the symbols and attitudes we project will arouse the desired reaction in them. This is known as the **presentation of self** in everyday life. Every human being is acting as if on a **stage**. In the **front region** we act to project an image to the audience. In the **back region** we hide other parts of our character that would give away the performance. This **impression management** usually takes place within a group of constituents. We work to give others a certain impression of us because an impression is a clue about hidden facts of our selves.

So to relate this to my life we must first look at the attitudes of the generalized other, in this case the American society, and how in this society people view smoking. When I started smoking, it was portrayed throughout the media as sexy, attractive, and associated with older, high class, and successful people. Because we were so young smoking was also rebellious and cool. These are all traits that the generalized other of American society deemed valuable and social demands were put on people to acquire these traits. So if smoking would symbolize these characteristics it would be a way for me to give others the impression that I possessed these qualities. I mentioned before that my friends and I used to analyze ourselves smoking in the mirror to see how we looked; to see what we were projecting to others. That is such a telling fact. We weren't smoking for ourselves, we were smoking for the reaction we would get from society and used cigarettes as a

symbol to project the image we wanted to others.

In a previous sociological self-exploration titled "From Anti-Man to Anti-Patriarchy" (see *Human Architecture*, Fall 2002 issue), I touched on the concept of a woman's dual consciousness of being at the same time the **surveyor and the surveyed**. In his book *Ways of Seeing* (1995), John Berger explains that a woman is constantly looking at herself to monitor how she is being seen by others. Women are taught from an early age how to control themselves so as to always project the proper image. It is a way of thinking that is embedded in the minds of most women but also unrecognizable to them. In relation to my experience with smoking, I was only twelve years old at the time when I watched myself inhaling and exhaling in the mirror, but I already knew it was important to see what smoking would make me look like to others and to control that image. I was the surveyor of myself and of the action I was taking part in order to be surveyed by others positively.

To further explore how smoking became a part of my character or my self, George Herbert **Mead's theory of the emergent self** is helpful as it explains how our selves are created. In order to form a self people must take on the ideas and attitudes of the generalized other so that they may function in society and interact with its members. This process of **socialization** begins in childhood. Children begin to take on the **role** of others and themselves as they **play** make-believe roles. They practice arousing certain feelings or actions in other people. Next, kids take part in organized **games** in which they must be able to take on the role of every other member and act in accordance to what is expected of them and other members for the good of the team as whole. Finally individuals are able to control their own desires, to self analyze, and correct themselves in order to gain acceptance from others. People take into account the generalized other which is the

sum of all of our interconnected attitudes and actions. The self can only come about after internalizing these attitudes. That is how a society controls its members and how people relate to one another. During my childhood the ideas of the generalized other towards smoking were good. When I played make-believe roles I pretended to be a smoker but don't ever remember pretending that it was bad. As I came to take on the attitudes and ideas of the generalized other I simply saw it as cool. I smoked to go along with group norms and gain acceptance from others.

Symbolic Interactionists seek to explain society on a micro level through face to face interactions. They believe in the importance of symbols to give life a shared meaning. Another concept that many of these theorists touch upon is the importance of an individual being socialized into **group norms** in order to function in society. Much of our actions and parts of our personality come from conformity to the group in order to gain acceptance and group membership. A movie that illustrates and challenges how important group norms and conformities are in shaping our lives is *Billy Elliot*.

Billy Elliot is a young boy living at home with his father, brother, and grandmother after the death of his mother. The two male role models in his life are coal miners; they are very masculine, violent, angry, and unapproachable. Although they offer Billy minimal guidance, they expect him to follow in their footsteps doing traditional family pastimes like boxing and probably working eventually in the mine. When they discover that not only has Billy rejected their ideals but those that the generalized other holds in relation to male gender roles they become furious. Billy has to hide his ballet dancing from them because it is an idea that runs against their group norms and is therefore unacceptable. Luckily Billy is able to gain acceptance for his ballet dancing by proving how great his talent is, letting his father see that it can give

him a better life. But until his hobby could be accepted by others it was very difficult for him to follow his own desires. It is very important in society to go along with the group, be accepted, and take on the ideas and practices of the society you belong to. Thus I chose to smoke when that was the practice popularized in my group.

In the foregoing, several sociological theories have helped me explore why I started smoking. It was seen as desirable at the time, I wanted to project a certain image and fit in with the group. Why, though, do I continue to smoke? Smoking is not considered desirable anymore. New anti-smoking campaigns have helped to portray it as dangerous and disgusting. It is becoming more expensive and more difficult to do because you can't smoke inside just about anywhere. I no longer want a cigarette to symbolize me because it does not represent what it used to. The fact remains, I still smoke. Not only because I'm physically addicted (there are patches for that) but for other reasons as well.

I think that in order to fully understand why I still smoke it is important to acknowledge when and where I smoke. The times I feel like I need a cigarette are after I eat, when I'm stressed out, when I'm out drinking, or when everyone else is having one. Some of these desires can be explained sociologically by the ideas of George Simmel and also by Exchange Theory.

In his "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (excerpted in Farganis, 146-157) George **Simmel** systematically explains the dialectic of individual and society. Man is not equipped to handle the complexities of today's lifestyle. Modern man must learn to cope with the metropolis in which many different images are bombarding him or her all the time. This creates high stress and intensification of nervous stimulation. Also because the metropolis is a mixture of so many people with so many different interests people need something to tie them together, to set them apart, make them easily

recognizable and identifiable to a certain group. This affects my smoking habits in two ways. First of all the **metropolis** of modern life does have a tendency to put people on **sensory overload**. Sometimes, honestly, my brain feels like it may explode. Those are the times I smoke a cigarette. It is a break from everything else. While writing a paper, at work, during an intense conversation or argument, a cigarette is a time out. By smoking a cigarette, I am identifying myself with the group of smokers. Five people standing outside smoking a cigarette are almost guaranteed to start a conversation. Smokers identify and feel comfortable with one another.

This brings me to **Exchange Theory**. People's interests find expression in social groups. People are attracted to a certain group because of the perceived reward they may receive from the association. Sometimes just the association itself is the reward. Often times it is not what people do together, but the fact that they do it with others that makes an experience enjoyable. Most human pleasures have their roots in social life. People are attracted to a social group and then want to prove themselves attractive to them. This can be done by taking part in doing and reciprocating favors. These actions are a huge part of human social life. It is also a huge part of the smoking subculture. One smoker is always quick to give a cigarette or lighter to another smoker. Actions like these bond smokers into social groups who then foster each other's interest in the habit. All of my friends smoke. It is a social thing for us. I think the main thing that keeps me smoking is the fact that all of my friends do. It is part of the social exchange process to us and therefore gains validity.

What interests me deeply is to understand why it took so long for social regulations of smoking to come about. Smoking kills people and not only smokers but also victims of second hand smoke. Suicide is illegal and so is murder so why has smoking

not faced serious threats and criticisms until now? Perhaps if smoking had been so widely criticized when I was younger and regulated better, I would not be a smoker today.

Conflict Theories may help give an explanation for the fact that society has condoned a life-threatening behavior for so many years. Conflict theorists see society as being controlled through power and coercion. They also agree that throughout history and historical periods a common thread is the presence of the dominant and the subordinate and conflict between them. Their perspectives on society can help to analyze the role of cigarette smoking in American society.

Max Weber's notion of the iron cage puts an interesting spin on the idea of smoking in America. Weber believed Ascetic Protestantism's favoring wealth, savings, and hard work is what contributed to the genesis of capitalism in Europe and the West. Fostered by the capitalist system, the underlying ideals of America have to do with money, the value of things, and working hard to attain wealth. Everything is boiled down to the rationality of costs and benefits. The personal attachments of traditional society is gone and a cold rational calculating society has taken its place. This rational society is controlled by companies, bureaucracies that derive power from their economic status. The more a business is worth, the more money it makes, the more valuable it is, and the more power it has. Therefore big tobacco business made sense for American society. It put a lot of money into our domestic market, and tax dollars in government budgets. The big cigarette producers like Phillip Morris would then gain more control over public policy and life in general because of their money. This is what Max Weber would see as the manifestation of the workings of capitalism. When money and capitalist rationalism—reinforced by a growing capitalist bureaucracy—mean more than people's lives,

humans are bound to suffer. Even now that legislation is being passed to control tobacco, it has not been made illegal. The government simply uses this killer to gain more money by putting high taxes on it. Then the medical industry makes money from smokers' hospital bills, and the funeral homes make money off people's deaths.

It may be taking comparisons out of historical context, but **Karl Marx** may have agreed with Weber that allowing people in society to smoke is directly influenced by the interests of the ruling class whom Marx called the bourgeoisie. According to his theory the dominant ideas present at any given time are the **ideas of the ruling class**. If big tobacco companies and the people that have vested interests in them are a part of that class, it is possible to assume that smoking would be one of those dominant ideas. Some smokers see their cigarettes as more than just rolled tobacco. Smoking satisfies many different needs depending on whom you ask. Marx may have attributed smoking to feelings of **alienation** in the individual that stem from being disassociated from one's work. This alienation causes people to seek new forms of gratification and fulfillment, often self-destructive, and one of these may be smoking.

C. Wright Mills's ideas perhaps most directly shed light on my attitudes towards smoking. Mills said that Americans have lost faith in old loyalties and have not yet been able to find new ones. This loss of faith and loyalties makes people indifferent to the state of their lives. He said people just don't care. We go through life content with our physical pleasures and recreational distractions without really taking an active interest in any certain cause or in ourselves for that matter. For instance, people know that a quarter pounder with cheese is unhealthy but they eat it any way because it is convenient and tasty. These are the same people who disagree with the war in the Middle East but never bother to voice that opinion. Along with this group are those

smokers who say "I'm going to die someday anyway, I might as well keep on smoking because I like it."

Other conflict theories can help us take our inquiry even farther. In his study of "Social Structure, Group Interests, and Conflict Groups" (Farganis, 266-284), Ralph **Dahrendorf** states that the masses may be excluded from political power but still enjoy a high standard of living, social rewards, and some political activism. So, as American citizens we may not have real power over the conditions of our society and the decisions that shape them but that is O.K. with us because we live comfortably with relative access to the political arena. If Americans feel that they need their voices to be heard about a certain issue they are able to do just that. As industrial society advances this access to politics grows stronger with the growth of communication which not only helps groups to organize but helps information spread to a large group of people. When the masses felt that it was time to take a stand about smoking they were able to. Through the organization of groups and most importantly through advances in communication anti-smoking legislation has been passed, the "truth" ad campaign has been launched, many other regulations put in place, and people educated about the dangers of cigarettes.

But another interesting point one may derive from Mills's perspective at this point. He may say that all of this attention toward the issue of smoking or not smoking, changing legislation, suing tobacco companies, and other ideas surrounding this controversy are all just a bunch of smoke and lights. In the realm of the real world issues like this are focused on to distract the masses from looking at the big picture of the kind of social system we live in—away from seeing who really has power. People may be able to make changes in the middle levels of power-structure like Congress and political action groups but there is a small group of elites in the world

who hold a power far greater than that. This group does not care about smoking or not smoking, which is used as an issue to let people feel like they have power, as if they have a voice. The real source of dominance and change in the world lies in the fact that “a few men have access to the means by which in a few days continents can be turned into thermonuclear wastelands” (Mills, in Farganis 286). This inhuman power is so much more than a few laws about cigarettes.

The movie *Erin Brockovich* provides a great illustration for our purpose of exploring how Conflict Theory sheds light on the role of big tobacco companies in American society today. The movie depicts a large corporation and the power it can exert over the common citizen. PG&E is a 28 billion dollar a year company. They knowingly exposed citizens of their surrounding town to toxic substances. They were able to make people believe that chromium six, a chemical they used in their plants, had many physical benefits when really it was infecting people with deadly diseases. They even destroyed and hid evidence linking the chromium to the illnesses. They were able to get away with all of this for twenty five years because they had power, money, and people’s trust in a system that actually dominates them. Eventually Erin Brockovich, along with the help of a few insiders from the company and those harmed by the company, was able to implicate PG&E in the illnesses and deaths of many citizens. Lawsuits and new regulations followed.

The path followed by PG&E resembles that of many cigarette companies. Tobacco is a forty five billion dollar a year industry. This indicates that many people smoke cigarettes. For years no one even knew they were harmful. Watching the movie *Twelve Angry Men* is a tell tale sign of this. The majority of the men in the movie are not only smoking but *chain-smoking* cigarettes. There are several times when the camera zooms in on the full ashtrays before fading to the

next seen as if it is a necessary prop. Throughout the entire movie one of the men has a hacking cough, as cigarette smoke is blown in his face; people keep asking him what could be wrong with his health. During the time when this movie was made people weren’t fully aware that nicotine is a poison, or that benzopyrene causes cancer, or that tobacco would end up causing 430,000 premature deaths each year. Finally in the early nineties all of that changed. For a few years people had known that smoking was dangerous and that it caused lung damage and cancer but no one was able to prove that the tobacco companies were aware of these dangers the entire time they were marketing the product. In 1994 a paralegal at one of the tobacco companies stole documents that proved the heads of the corporation knew cigarettes were addicting and had lied under oath. In 1996 a biochemist came forward with information that he had pushed one of the companies to make safer cigarettes (informing them of the dangers smoking had for people) but he had been denied. Later that year the first lawsuit against tobacco companies was filed and won, and the first legislation controlling tobacco was passed. Since then the controversy has continued to unravel and tobacco companies have lost much of their power, money, and especially the trust of the people.

On the opposite side of the spectrum from conflict theorists we find **functionalists**. Functionalists view society as emerging from consensual agreements based on shared values and norms. Through these agreements people view the society they live in as legitimate and it becomes their bond. Where conflict theorists would say that smoking is a projection of the interests of the elite, functionalists would say it serves a purpose and function for members of society.

Emile **Durkheim** was a functionalist, though the label emerged much later. He was one of the first people to view society

as an entity in and of itself. It is external to individuals and forces them to conform. He also introduced the idea of “**social fact**,” of what exists independently from individual human acts and induces their conformity to “objective” social norms. Smoking cigarettes in order to gain acceptance would be, Durkheim may argue, one of these “social facts.” I was not born with that idea; it was taught to me by society and existed independently of me. Somewhere I learned that smoking would lead to acceptance. This idea exerted a force on me and in turn I began to smoke. When studying **suicide** Durkheim realized that a person’s decision to take his life had a great deal to do with the degree of his integration in and bond with social groups. His study may reinforce the idea that human beings smoke because they have too much or too little social solidarity.

Talcott **Parsons** is another functionalist. One of his studies had to do with age and sex in the social structure (see Farganis, 236-246). Although his work is a little outdated in its application to modern society it does contain some valuable points of interest. For instance, Parsons writes about the “youth culture,” the time in life when adolescents rebel against adult norms. At the time when Parsons wrote this study he found that there was no female counterpart to the “bad boy” that is ever present in adolescence. His reasoning for this finding was that girls were in direct contact with their mothers at all times because women stayed at home with the children. This allowed females to more readily observe and replicate their roles as adult women. Males lacked this contact with their future gender role because fathers spent most of their time at work. As a result males were not as directly socialized into the adult role giving them more freedom to break away from it.

In today’s society both men and women spend a great deal of time away from the home and from their children especially during their adolescence. This gives both

boys and girls more of an opportunity to stray from the path their parents would like to see them on. Smoking is a very common form of rebellion. Parsons also gives an explanation for smoking among adults and how it is differentiated by gender lines. Women are taught all of their lives that the best trait they can have is to be desirable to men so that they may end up with a rich husband whose success will help to define them as a person. Men are taught that they must become rich and powerful so that they may attract a beautiful wife and be judged as successful by others. Smoking has come to symbolize both attractiveness and power in our society which makes adults want to smoke to help to enhance their image.

Robert K. **Merton** provided sociologists and social scientists an interesting way to study society. Merton introduced the idea of **manifest and latent functions**. Manifest functions are those that are intended and latent functions are those that are not. For example a manifest function of smoking may be to satisfy a nicotine craving or to take a social break from work. Latent functions of smoking may be to project a certain image or to fit in with a peer group. When looking at manifest and latent functions together we are able to see the entire picture surrounding an issue. Recognizing latent functions also helps people not to pass naïve moral judgments. Instead of looking at a teenage smoker as a rebel or a “bad boy” one may be able to see them as a person with insecurities seeking to fit into a group.

Conversely, through the influences of the media and people around us smoking takes on the latent symbolism of prestige and power. As L.M. Damian asserts in his essay “Conspicuous Conflict” (2002) that the quest for power and prestige has become a dominant ideology in modern life and is viewed as a means to happiness by many Americans. The movie *Affluenza* also deals with this idea as it shows the Ameri-

can population seeking material possessions in order to fulfill some need and to give off an aura of dominance over those who have less. Smoking has come to represent these ideals; even the brand of cigarette one smokes can contribute to a person's ranking of power and prestige. Damian suggests that in order to dispel such ideologies in our lives and not take part in actions that foster them we must have "extensive" perception. This will allow us to see things as they are not as they are labeled. I must be able to recognize a cigarette not as a rolled stick of tobacco, but as a status symbol.

Jürgen **Habermas**, a Critical Theorist, believed that despite the limits of capitalism, modern rational knowledge can be accessible to all people and thus help shape society into a just and democratic order. The current anti-smoking campaign, providing people with knowledge regardless of the power of the tobacco companies supports Habermas' idea. As a postmodernist, however, **Foucault** may argue the opposite. Postmodernist theories arose almost in opposition to all those that came before them. Most **postmodernists** also seek to problematize and question the relationships among knowledge, science, and power in industrial society. Foucault brings up the notion of "carceral society" in which every social institution reinforces the coercion and power of society as a whole. Scientific knowledge has had a huge impact on these arenas because of the control it exerts over people. Psychiatrists, schools, teachers, medical doctors, scientists and others are all putting their knowledge to work in order to define and determine what is "normal." Foucault believes that we let scientific knowledge and those who spread it dictate the path of society. My medical doctor has told me repeatedly to quit smoking and so I believe that it is bad for me and I'm harming myself. During therapy for panic attacks my psychiatrist told me not to quit until I had dealt with my anxiety, so I didn't. We see

these people, professionals, as being accredited with a form of elite knowledge. We trust them and allow their knowledge to control our actions.

Postmodernism challenges the idea that the modern human thinks for himself. Our immense reliance on rationalism allows us to accept certain scientific facts to be true and to simply live by them, to let our thoughts and actions be controlled by society. **Nietzsche** is one of the main influences among postmodernists. He believed that rationalism and all of the institutions of society are in place to uphold certain Western Christian ideals which are not necessarily legitimate human truths. Nietzsche's hope was for the *Übermensch* or superman to overcome the current state of man so humans can become "authors of their own lives" instead of letting society dictate who they were and impose itself on them.

Why is it that people let what is around them control their lives? Why are we so affected by our society? What is it about human nature that allows us to passively give up our own will and accept what we are told?

In his piece titled "From the Author" (excerpted from *All and Everything: Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*), **Gurdjieff** criticizes modern man for exactly the questions I just raised. He describes the human organism symbolically as being composed of a carriage, a horse, a coachman, and the passenger representing the physical body, feelings, consciousness, and the "I." Modern man has a broken and run down carriage because he does not take care of his body or do with it what was intended. His horse is wild and out of control because it has been neglected and uneducated. The coachman is drunk with no control over the horse meaning that the organism as a whole is powered by his impulsive feelings and desires and not by his consciousness. Finally there is no definite passenger; one or another comes along for a ride but the

modern man has no true self.

Gurdjieff believes that we humans live in sleep throughout our lives reacting to stimuli and ignoring important parts of our composition. Modern man neglects those parts of his character that could lead him to reach his full potential and instead is controlled by desires for food, drink, sex, and pleasure. Perhaps the reason for my bad habit is that my mental self has no intelligent control over my physical and/or emotional selves and desires. One would think that if my consciousness recognized the dangers of smoking it would control my desires. Perhaps if I refine and train the separate parts of myself I will be able to dispel my desires for cigarettes.

All of my questions about smoking have not yet been answered. I have seen that I smoke to fit a certain image and gain a desirable reaction from others. Also I enjoy the social solidarity I feel with other smokers and the relationships I develop through the habit. I continue to smoke because I am led by blind physical desire and because cigarette use is not widely enough condemned by our "rational" society. I have seen how smoking is a social product and how I also am a product of that society. I have recognized the implications of smoking in my life and yet am not ready to reject it. There must be something else besides the issues I am aware of that continues my drive to smoke, that makes it a habit, that allows me to actively engage in the activity without even thinking about it. This something else is discussed in the book *You can do it with Self-Hypnosis* by Charles E. Henderson (1983).

Henderson explores the idea of the subconscious mind controlling our automatic impulses. Because our thoughts are stuck in the conscious state of mind we have no access to the subconscious even though it has control over us. The subconscious is the part of the mind that protects us. It is what pulls our hand away from a hot stove. The subconscious mind is preoc-

cupied with goal seeking and group membership because both of these functions are necessary in the life of a human being. A good example of the subconscious mind helping us to attain both of these things and protecting us when we don't is illustrated in the essay "Repairing the Soul: Matching Inner with Outer Beauty" by Kristy Canfield (2002). The author describes how she was shunned by her peers because of physical differences in her speech. This exile caused anxiety, depression, and hopelessness. As a result Kristy was subconsciously conditioned to isolate herself from the outside world in order to protect herself from rejection.

The subconscious learns and experiences then timelessly holds onto the emotional qualities of each experience. This part of the mind is based on imprints that are learned early in life and remain inside of us, unchanging. The film *Multiple Personalities* features several different patients who suffer from these mental illnesses. In every case the problems are said to stem from childhood. Often times the individual is not even aware of the events which caused their subconscious mind to create the other personalities. In every case early events in life became internalized as subconscious imprints inside of the mind. The beliefs, ideas, and values of the group are internalized as identification imprints and learned without the learner knowing he or she learned them. The habit of smoking usually comes from these identifications. Either the subconscious mind identifies with the role of an adult, with a significant other who smoked, or a group of peers. In any case the subconscious links smoking with these identifications and doesn't let go. Without realizing it, smoking to me may mean being an adult, fitting in, or something I am totally unaware of. It symbolizes something important that the subconscious wants to protect. This is a reason that so many people find it hard to quit smoking. They may consciously reject the

habit but subconsciously they are attracted to it because of the emotional response of the original imprint in the subconscious.

Henderson introduces a method with which to explore and control one's own subconscious mind in order to quit smoking and other habits. I have decided to try these methods but because it takes about six weeks to accomplish I will be unable to share the results with you the reader. What I can say is that I find the idea of identification imprints legitimate when looking at my own life and smoking habit in the contexts of role identification (when I used to play house) and group identification (choosing to smoke because of my peers).

Exercising my **sociological imagination**, I can see how society has played a huge role in my decision to smoke. Coupled with my subconscious mind within, broader society has fostered the habit throughout my life. It bothers me that I have acquired a pastime that inflicts such harm onto my person. It bothers me that the habit is so strongly internalized that even after analyzing smoking and cigarettes using many sociological theories and some other helpful references I am unable to throw my pack in the garbage. This paper has once again opened my eyes to the social forces that are at work in our lives everyday and has made me more aware of the role society plays in my everyday life.

Perhaps this knowledge will help me to better control myself and my actions.

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