This association between smoking and alcohol consumption is of concern for the public because, as my informants have shown, many college students rely on smoking cigarettes while they are consuming alcohol. Because these students do not consider themselves to be smokers, when asked to fill out any type of survey regarding their health or when filling out their health history, they will place themselves into the category of non-smoker. However, this is misleading because of the actual flexibility of the “smoker” category. On a survey, many of the students who do smoke on occasion would not identify with the “smoker” group, which would cause results to show more non-smokers on campus than may be accurate.

In addition to the concern of liminal non-smokers who are smoking at parties, regular smokers discussed how they smoke many more cigarettes while at a party and drinking alcohol. As all of my informants have told me, alcohol and cigarettes go hand-in-hand for college students because of the taste association and social reasons. For Dana, sometimes a cigarette acts like a chaser for the alcoholic beverage she has consumed. As Dana described:

If you’re taking a shot or drinking something, you can take a drag of the cigarette and the taste, no matter how bad it is, will go away. Because cigarettes and alcohol tastes are so strong, sometimes the taste of the cigarette is preferred over the taste of the alcohol. When I’m drinking, I need cigarettes. And I love the tastes together because [they] complement one another (January 28, 2005).

In Dana’s case, the taste of the cigarette is associated with the taste of alcohol, and she depends on cigarettes to lessen the taste of the alcohol. At fraternity and other college parties, the alcohol is flowing and students may feel inclined, like Dana, to use a cigarette as a chaser for the many shots and other beverages they are drinking. Besides using cigarettes as chasers for alcohol, my informants described how alcohol makes people
crave cigarettes. Heather mentioned this phenomenon in a way that epitomized the feelings of most of my informants. She told me:

Yes, there is a relationship between alcohol and cigarettes! Once and for all, here it is: alcohol makes you crave cigarettes. You are drunk and feeling all toasty and light and then you start getting very oral. Then everyone around starts to smoke when they’re drunk...anyone I know...even the non-smokers that I know smoke when they get drunk. The fact is, you just suck cigarette down when you’re drinking; just as fast as you suck down the drinks (February 24, 2005). Therefore, there are students who are smoking cigarettes continuously while at parties. These students may be regular smokers or individuals who identify themselves as non-smokers, but whichever category the student may fit into, the bottom line is that cigarettes are being consumed at a high rate during this sort of social interaction. This fact either helps to reinforce and increase a student’s habit, or it can help make a new and regular smoker out of a previously non-smoker.

Students use cigarettes in a variety of ways at parties. As mentioned above, the non-smokers will use smoking as a way to increase the effects of the alcohol and to increase the “buzz” that they receive from drinking. I believe that because these students do not smoke on a regular basis they are still able to sense the chemicals from the cigarette and also feel a “buzz” from the cigarette. Beyond the “buzz,” there is a social pressure to smoking at a party. On the other hand, most regular smokers smoke while drinking alcohol at a party because of the calming effects of tobacco. As Ben told me, “If you’re so drunk that you’re feeling a little off, a cigarette will help calm your stomach” (February 21, 2005). Along these lines, Allison mentions that smoking helps to clear her mind if she has had too much to drink (November 19, 2004), though she may not be the best judge of her mental state at such a moment. For smokers, using cigarettes as a way
to calm down and clear their mind after a long night of drinking reinforces their habit, as well as it reinforces their conviction that a person needs cigarettes when consuming alcohol. Unlike the “social smokers” who use cigarettes to increase their “buzz,” regular smokers use cigarettes to “take the edge off” of the effects of the alcohol, as John told me (March 7, 2005). Jason notes that whenever he is drinking alcohol, he always craves cigarettes even more than at other times (February 27, 2005). While none of my informants could pinpoint exactly why they desire cigarettes while drinking alcohol, I believe that the connection goes back to the point that many people began smoking while at a party and now associate drinking alcohol with smoking. This illustrates the fact that many college students are addicted to the cigarette because my informants claim their bodies crave the nicotine even more when drinking alcohol. While my informants believe this is physiological, I have been unable to find any literature that supports their assertion.

Although non-smokers and smokers claim to use cigarettes for different purposes while attending a party, there appears to be a similar theme among all those who are smoking cigarettes while drinking alcoholic beverages. In nearly every case I observed, as well as in interviews with my informants, smoking a cigarette while at a party was indicative of having a good time, being relaxed, and socializing with friends. The best example came from my conversation with Heather, where she described how cigarettes can be used to signify that the party will be something special. As she noted:

Sometime, what would characterize a really fancy-shmancy party at some fraternity house, a formal maybe, would be if there were bowls of cigarettes [sitting] out. Then you really knew it was going to be a great night. In other words, lots of alcohol, and lots of happy people, socializing comfortably and smoking like chimneys (February 24, 2005).
This example clearly illustrates the role that cigarettes play in the college party scene. As Heather mentioned, the cigarettes were freely distributed to the students attending the party in order to encourage more drinking and more socializing, along with more smoking – all of which are considered to be crucial for a successful party and happy guests. While non-smokers and smokers may describe different purposes for lighting up a cigarette while at a party, the underlying factor for smoking at a party is to portray the image of having a great time.

Social Cohesion through Cigarettes

Another crucial component to the party scene at colleges in America is the way cigarettes are also used by students wishing to fit in and to establish social cohesion with other students. This particular use for cigarettes permeates all levels of the social scene, including regular smokers, liminal non-smokers, and even non-smokers. People will smoke at a party in order to feel like they are a part of the scene, and that they belong with the festive group. In my observations and interviews with informants, people at a party who are not holding a drink in their hands will look out of place, appearing as though they are not enjoying themselves or having a good time. While not everyone is smoking at a bar or party, those persons who do have a cigarette in their hand look as though they are having more fun and fitting in with the scene, unlike the individuals who are not smoking. This brings up an interesting point about the symbolism of cigarettes. Cigarettes have an allure that appeals to students because they are seen as risky, sociable, indulgent, and acceptable (MacFadyen et al. 2003: 497), which fits well with the college
lifestyle. This symbolism of cigarettes also encourages students to pick up a cigarette while they are engaged in the college social scenes.

As in the example of the fraternity party described by Heather above, a great party and a fun time are shown through cigarettes. Therefore, students may feel compelled to smoke cigarettes to show that they are having fun, enjoying the party, and fitting in with the social scene. Using cigarettes to fit in with other party goers is especially evident in the case where a person may not have a drink in his or her hand, but is holding a cigarette, as though the cigarette is a substitute for the otherwise ubiquitous alcohol. As long as either a cigarette or drink is held, the person looks as though he or she is having fun versus the person who is not smoking or drinking. This person appears out of place and as though he or she would rather be somewhere else (Observations February 16, 2004).

During one of my conversations with Allison, she mentioned how cigarettes are used by students to fit in at the parties on campus, although she notes that this may be a subconscious action. As she detailed:

If you’re a smoker, then you’ll feel empty without a cigarette at a party. The non-smokers will pick up a cigarette when they’re drunk. I guess it is because they want to fit in. People will probably pick up the cigarette subconsciously to fit in and they don’t want to look like the odd man out because they don’t have a drink or cigarette (February 27, 2005).

Even non-smokers, as Allison described, do not want to feel different or odd because they are not holding a cigarette. However, the pressure to fit in and have a cigarette is not the only driving force behind students’ habits. There is a certain amount of power within the cigarette to bring the attention to the person who is smoking the cigarette. The smoker, through the cigarette, has the power to make others focus on him and engage with certain
behaviors. For individuals who want to exert power and appear poised, they have the support “from the motions of extracting a cigarette, lighting it, exhaling the smoke, and holding the cigarette” (Schelling 1992: 431). These movements attract the attention of individuals around the smoker and focus their interest, which reinforces the power of the smoker.

The powerful symbolic nature of cigarettes pressures students to smoke just as much as their desire to assimilate with the social crowd. Smokers will feel “naked if [they] don’t have a cigarette and drink in [their] hand,” as John told me. Everyone attending the parties will use cigarettes as a prop to ensure that they appear to be fitting into the party scene and to signal to everyone else that they are having a good time. As Dana notes:

At a frat party I think cigarettes are a thing to do. I don’t think a lot of people actually want to smoke. At parties, you have a beer in one hand, but you’re just standing there. Then, if you light up a cigarette, now it looks like you’re in control and are doing something. With a cigarette in your hand, you look like you fit in and no one questions why you are standing in the corner with a beer in your hand. No one will question why you aren’t hanging out (January 28, 2005).

This concern for giving the impression that you fit in, that you are seemingly having a fun time at the party as represented by drinking and smoking, and that you look the part of the happy college student, directly reflects Michel Foucault’s theory of panopticism and resulting self-surveillance. As Foucault describes, panopticism is the idea that someone is watching at all times, and the person being observed is never aware when he is actually under observation. For those being so closely monitored, the “slightest movements are supervised [and] all events are recorded” (Foucault 1975:197). This causes people to sense that they are continually under observation. Because of this awareness, people will begin the process of self-surveillance, or monitoring their own
behavior, to make sure they conform to the behaviors of those around them. If a person
does not check his own behavior, then he may be singled out as different from the rest of
the crowd and pushed to the margin of the social group. The effect of living in the
panopticon is to produce a person in “a state of conscious and permanent visibility,
[assuring] the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault 1975: 201). For those
individuals who adopt the method of self-surveillance and smoke a cigarette to conform
to their peers, they are embracing the power of the cigarette. This power further extends
to the individual, as he now has the power to focus the attention on himself as he
emulates the smoking movements of lighting the cigarette, holding the cigarette, and
bringing the cigarette to his mouth. It is this particular process of the panopticon that
effectively produces a person who implements self-surveillance to be sure he is always
behaving in the appropriate manner and fitting in with his social surroundings.

Foucault’s theory about self-surveillance in the modern period can be used to
illustrate the way college students behave at parties. Because they have the idea that
someone may be watching them at the party, people will pick up a cigarette to give the
appearance that they are fitting in and having fun. This idea comes from the actions of
other students who may comment on a person’s lack of beer or social engagement.
Students at a party therefore practice self-surveillance to make sure they look like the
prototypical, happy college student in such a circumstance. As my informants described
the situation to me, students use cigarettes to assimilate into the social gathering rather
than appear unconnected as though they are not having a good time.

In addition to using cigarettes to fit in at a party, cigarettes also help to establish
social cohesion among partygoers or other members of a college social group. When
students at a party light up a cigarette, they are hoping to establish some sort of social unity with the other people at the party. By having a cigarette in hand, social cohesion is confirmed through a feeling of camaraderie and solidarity with the other smokers at the social event. As Allison told me, “I’ll meet my friend to have a cigarette. So then we’ll meet and talk and have a cigarette together” (November 19, 2004). Jason also uses cigarettes in this way in order to connect him socially to more people. As he told me:

I began smoking because a lot of other people in my dorm smoked. The guys on my floor were a major influence on me because when we smoked, we hung out and I was really craving a more involved social life. Hanging out with the guys kept me smoking (February 27, 2005).

I find it interesting that he uses the term “craving” to describe his need for a social life. It would appear, through his admission, that students may have some sort of addiction to social life in addition to an addiction to cigarettes. It was Jason’s physical need for a more engaging social life that encouraged his addiction to cigarettes. Similarly, it was Allison’s need to meet with her friends and smoke cigarettes that reinforces the notion that students use cigarette smoking as a way to connect with other people and establish social bonds with their peers.

Cigarettes are used in these particular cases as a social prop, helping people feel more comfortable and relaxed in certain situations. At a party scene, smoking cigarettes confirms the social cohesion with other smokers and offers a new way to meet people. Mostly, the way my informants meet people with cigarettes comes from borrowing cigarettes and lights from others, which will be discussed in much greater detail in the next chapter. As Rachel told me:

It’s weird because there are people on campus who I do not know at all, but they’re smokers and have seen me smoking, and we have this weird hello thing going. We always say hi. I mean, there’s the same huddle of
people outside of Stager everyday and it’s this weird little community, which is kind of nice (November 17, 2004).

Rachel explains that it feels good to be a smoker on the college campus because additional or potential friends are made through the habit. She consequently feels as though she belongs to a smaller and more intimate community on campus than non-smoking students may feel. Heather also admits to meeting many people through smoking outside of Shadek-Fackenthal Library on Franklin & Marshall’s campus: “I made more friends out there, as a smoker, than I’ve made in any one situation, ever” she told me (February 24, 2005). Smoking therefore creates social ties among students in college, and this, in turn, reinforces the cigarette habit as a good thing from the point of view of those who desire social interaction.

Since cigarette smoking tends to occupy various functions at college, it can be extremely hard for students to attempt to quit smoking during their undergraduate years. As most of my informants told me, students may well, therefore, set the goal of quitting after college. For example, Ben finds the social aspects of cigarette smoking make it too difficult to contemplate quitting during college. As he noted:

Personally, I live in a fraternity house. Trying to quit is damn near impossible because there is always someone smoking a cigarette around me and it just gets frustrating. After college it will be easier [to quit] (February 21, 2005).

As Dana also told me:

I have access to cigarettes whenever I want when I’m at college. When I’m in my dorm room, if I want a cigarette, I can get one right away. I’m so close to everyone in the dorms, and since everyone smokes, you have access (January 28, 2005).

Both Ben and Dana elaborated on the fact that numerous students smoke during college, and that cigarettes are always circulating among them, making it difficult for anyone to
try to quit. For those who are successful, like Heather, they find it easier quit while away from the campus environment for an extended period of time, such as winter break. As Heather told me: “I had to wait [to quit] until break and then could come back with two weeks quit under my belt just so I could handle it.” Since cigarettes are also used heavily at fraternity and other parties during college, the prevalence of tobacco consistently increases the chances of a student relapsing and smoking a cigarette, even when he or she is trying to quit smoking. As Kate said:

When you’re drinking you’re obviously more relaxed, but if you’re a smoker trying to wean yourself off of smoking, drinking will make you more relaxed and make it a lot easier to cave to that desire to smoke. Plus, atmospheres where there tends to be alcohol, like at fraternity parties or a bar, the atmosphere is smoky and then you’ll feel like lighting up (February 17, 2005).

All of my informants suggested that the role cigarettes play in the social atmosphere of college tend to discourage students against quitting smoking, or make it incredibly difficult for a person to attempt to quit smoking. Furthermore, the social cohesion among smokers is solidified through the borrowing and exchange of cigarettes from person to person. This form of reciprocity continues to engage students among other smokers on campus, making it even more difficult to attempt quitting or to successfully quit smoking. The process of reciprocity is examined in further detail in the following chapter.
Chapter 5

"Smoker Etiquette 101"

Reciprocity

After spending a lot of time observing and talking with smokers, an interesting set of manners began to pique my interest. A few of my informants brought to my attention certain and specific, if unspoken, rules to which all smokers must adhere. The practice of smoker etiquette establishes the boundaries of the reciprocity of bumming cigarettes and lights from one another. The reciprocal exchange implied by giving a cigarette or light to another person and receiving something in return helps to bind together members of the smoking community and create relationships among smokers. As I described in Chapter 4, smoking college students use cigarettes to foster social cohesion with other students on campus. As was also mentioned, cigarettes function as a social prop to aid in the process of meeting new people and forming new friendships. One of the prominent ways of doing this is through the exchange of cigarettes and lights with other smokers.

The reciprocal nature of cigarettes can be theorized using the work of Marcel Mauss on gift giving. As Mauss tells us, in many societies there is a system of total services. In such a system, there are many obligations which members of the society must fulfill, notably the obligation to reciprocate a gift that is given, receive a gift, and give a gift (Mauss 1950:13). As Mauss notes, Malinowski, in his study of the Trobriand Islands, discusses the kula, a circular exchange of necklaces and bracelets (Mauss 1950:23). The circularity of the kula exchange is important, as most gift exchange follows a similar pattern. As Malinowski described about the Trobrianders, the circle
allows the gifts to pass continually from one person to the next and be constantly reciprocated. Mauss suggests that there are obligations that must be followed in order to avoid offending a trading partner; in other words, gifts must be given, received, and reciprocated.

As my informants have told me, when “bumming” cigarettes and lights from one another, a person gives a cigarette with the understanding that he or she will receive a cigarette in return at some other point of time. Heather told me that when “bumming cigarettes you know that what you shell out will always come back to you” (February 24, 2005). It is expected that gifts will be returned and a person is looked upon unfavorably if he or she does not complete the exchange. This trust is reinforced by Mauss’s statement that “the unreciprocated gift still makes the person who has accepted it inferior, particularly when it has been accepted with no thought of returning it” (Mauss 1950:65). Because smokers understand that a person would not request a cigarette without the thought of returning the favor someday, smokers are likely and willing to bum cigarettes from one another. The unspoken rules of smoking etiquette dictate that gifts will be returned and exchange must flow freely in order to strengthen the social connections and relationships among people.

When “bumming” a cigarette from someone, my informants all said they prefer to ask for a cigarette from a close friend before asking an acquaintance or a complete stranger. Smokers will ask their friends for cigarettes before other students on campus because they are more intimate with their friends, and the cigarettes are always flowing in all directions between people who know each other well. Among his or her friends, a smoker knows there will always be cigarettes available if he should find himself without
one. As Allison told me, "I won't bum cigarettes off of people that I don't associate with on a daily basis. If I see them everyday, then I know I'll end up giving them a cigarette at some point" (February 27, 2005). Within close friendships, smoker etiquette in bummimg cigarettes is less formalized, because of the close social connectedness between friends. In these cases, cigarettes are handed out without any hesitation, since the group of friends associates with one another on a regular basis. Therefore, it is implicitly understood that the favor will be returned.

When a smoker is bummimg cigarettes from an acquaintance or a stranger, the rules of bummimg and reciprocating cigarettes become much more formal. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, bummimg a cigarette from a complete stranger on campus is looked down upon by most of my student informants. Bummimg from a total stranger on campus should only be done in an emergency. As Heather explained:

Usually, however, you don't ask for cigarettes from total strangers on campus. But, you do if it's an emergency, and people who smoke know that if they don't know you, and you're asking to bum [a cigarette], then it's probably an emergency (February 24, 2005).

Instead of asking for a cigarette from a stranger, smokers try to rely on their close friends, or else circles of smokers they know marginally. While most of my informants would rather not bum from campus strangers, they will ask for cigarettes from acquaintances they know only to some extent through another friend or through class. These acquaintances also include groups of smokers who fit into the groups who are standing outside of buildings such as Stager at Franklin & Marshall College, or Campbell Hall at York College. Heather told me the patio outside of Shadek-Fackenthal Library at Franklin & Marshall College is also a place filled with regular smokers: "The Shad-Fack regulars are people you know by default but you can always bum from them and they will
bum to you” (February 24, 2005). In this context, the use of the word default describes the social network Heather has created with particular students she does not know personally, but who she knows through her own friends on campus.

In the instance when a smoker bums a cigarette from an acquaintance on campus, it is assumed by smoking etiquette that the borrower will then stand with the giver to smoke together. In this instance, giving and receiving a cigarette is a sign of a social bond between the two smokers. This is the most notable form of the etiquette rules. If a person bums a cigarette, then simply walks away, it is not only seen as wrong, but positively as rude to the person who gave the cigarette. As John noted, “There’s this underlying [rule] that if you bum a cigarette from someone, then it is customary to stand and have a conversation with that person” (March 7, 2005). Not only would it be seen as rude to walk away without having the obligatory conversation sharing the cigarette break together, but my informants note that the conversation helps to begin a new friendship. This increases the social circle of a smoker, particularly extending relations with those individuals from which he can bum cigarettes. As Heather mentioned:

Friendships are usually established when you bum from someone and then you stick around with one another to talk over the smoker. This is what usually happens, which is good because it widens your circle of smoke friends and increases bum buddies (February 24, 2005).

Bumming cigarettes not only works to satisfy a smoker’s desire for a cigarette, but helps to create additional friendships and solidify a network of smokers with whom one can share cigarettes. The exchange of cigarettes strengthens the social ties between people, while increasing a person’s desire to smoke and belong to the smoking group.

There is also the example of the so-called non-smoker who will bum cigarettes at parties. This case is worth mentioning in order to understand how these students fit into
the social network and their obligations for reciprocity. Wendy -- a senior who smoked cigarettes at parties during her freshman year of college -- told me that, although she considered herself a non-smoker, she would smoke when attending parties. “When I came to college there were tons of people smoking at parties so once I would get a bit loose, I would just ask for cigarettes because it was something to do” (February 4, 2004). Although she smoked two or three cigarettes a night, she never felt obligated to return the favor or offer to pay for a cigarette. Jason told me that, when his non-smoking friends ask for cigarettes at a party, they offer money in exchange for the cigarette. As Jason described to me, “My friends who bum smokes usually pay me a quarter for them, which is a good deal if you ask me” (February 27, 2005).

Interestingly, Wendy never felt pressured to supply others with cigarettes and never purchased her own packs of cigarettes to carry to parties or to give to other smokers. Although she never felt any obligation to return cigarettes to those students from whom she bummed cigarettes, I am sure her constant requests for cigarettes did not go unnoticed. As John told me, “The people who don’t consider themselves to be smokers because they don’t buy their own packs and just bum off other people puts a huge drain on my pocket” (March 7, 2005). Because of the expense of cigarettes, it is an annoyance to students like John when so-called non-smokers continue to receive cigarettes from them but never offer any type of repayment or reciprocation. Because Wendy’s habit of smoking cigarettes at parties did not continue for too long (she stopped smoking the end of the fall semester of her freshman year), I imagine that she was allowed to avoid the necessary obligation to return cigarettes to those from whom she bummed.
The period of time she smoked may have been viewed by other smokers as a type of probationary, or liminal, period, during which it was to be decided whether or not she would become a regular smoker and join the smoking community. Had she continued to smoke and started to smoke on a more regular basis, then I expect Wendy would have been forced to buy her own packs of cigarettes, from which she could contribute to the exchange among smokers. Instead, she fully returned to the non-smoking category, where she was exempt from taking part in the obligatory exchange of cigarettes.

Smokers must also abide by specific rules when sharing lighters with one another, although bumming a light follows different rules in smoker etiquette than does bumming cigarettes from other smokers. When a smoker has a cigarette on hand but finds himself without a lighter, then it is necessary to “bum a light” from another smoker. The most significant difference between asking for a light versus asking for a cigarette comes from the idea that “a lighter is cheap. Cigarettes are not [cheap]” (Interview with John; March 7, 2005). Therefore, lighters are exchanged between people whether there is a pre-established social relationship or not. Smokers will not hesitate to ask strangers for the use of their lighters because this object is cheap and does not require the person to give an expensive cigarette. As Jason told me, “I will give anyone who asks for a light a light because it’s just mean to deprive someone of a light” (February 27, 2005). Unlike cigarettes, there are no social boundaries that affect whether a smoker will ask someone else for a light. Lighters are not considered worthy of the more formal etiquette that controls the circulation of expensive cigarettes. Smokers therefore feel minimal social pressure to reciprocate a future light to a particular person and will ask anyone, even a stranger, for a light for their cigarette. Giving a smoker a light for his or her cigarette
offers the minimal recognition of communal membership and acknowledges the understanding that there should always be a light for other smokers.

Establishing New Friends

Lighters also work as a prop, a way for smokers to meet new people and widen their circle of friends. On a college campus, this can be an especially useful tool as students come to college without their social network in place and desire to make new friends. Asking for a light gives a person an excuse to go and talk to someone else across the room. At parties, especially, asking for a light offers a good introduction to another person and is often used as a technique for flirting. Because a lighter is relatively inexpensive, there is no obligation for a person to reciprocate, which can make asking for a light an easier way to meet people than asking for a cigarette. Requesting a cigarette requires the giver to hand over an expensive cigarette and then expects the recipient to reciprocate at a later date. This method can be more daunting because it requires the giver to, in fact, be open to the possibility of communication. Asking for a light is a less demanding way to establish a line of communication and start a friendship or romantic relationship with someone.

Many friendships have started as a result of someone asking for a light. As Rachel informed me:

There's this one kid who I don't even know his name, but I met him because he borrowed my lighter one day, and ever since then, we've been on friendly terms in the sense that if we're both sitting outside at the same time, then we'll chat for awhile (November 17, 2004).

Although Rachel and this young man may not be close friends, it is noteworthy that they have now become acquaintances who will share a cigarette break and have a
conversation. From this casual smoking friendship comes another person on campus on whom Rachel can depend whenever she may need a cigarette, whenever she may need a light for a cigarette, or if she wants some light conversation.

Asking for a cigarette or a lighter off campus also tends to be a method for meeting new people. As Allison pointed out:

[Smoking] is a way to meet people. I mean, in New York I saw this guy opening a fresh pack of cigarettes and I asked him for one. Then we talked and rode the subway together and talked about how long we’ve been smoking, what kind of cigarettes we smoke, things like that (February 27, 2005).

Allison explained that in the city she was more likely to ask a perfect stranger for a cigarette because her chances of seeing him again were not very likely, unlike on campus. Therefore, she would never ask a stranger on campus for a cigarette. On campus, she will instead ask for a lighter in order to meet or flirt with someone. As she described for me, “There’s this thing where if I ask a guy for a lighter, instead of giving me the lighter he’ll light my cigarette. And it’s a sexual thing” (February 27, 2005). In this instance, the young man has not only reciprocated by giving Allison the light needed for her cigarette, he lighted the cigarette for her in a suggestive manner illustrative of his interest in her and the possibility of furthering the conversation.

Besides asking for a light from someone, smokers will ask for a cigarette from others they may want to know better or meet at a party or bar. In a study conducted in British universities, small groups of students enrolled in their first year of college discussed the social role cigarettes play on campus. According to these students, cigarettes were used as a way to help students “fit in” with their new social lives and to establish friendships (MacFadyen et al. 2003: 494). John describes how he uses the ploy
of asking for a cigarette or a light when he wishes to meet girls he sees at the bars near campus. As John explained to me:

There are a few phrases to bum a cigarette or a light. The best way is “Excuse me, can I trouble you for a cigarette or for a light?” And that works best, and I’ll have girls who’ll say, “Oh, that’s so charming!” If you want to meet someone, it’s the simplest way to go up to someone and ask for a cigarette. And that’s where your conversation starts from (March 7, 2005).

According to my informants, using the request for a cigarette or a lighter is a successful method to meet new people and flirt with others they see at parties. In the same British study, respondents also described using cigarettes as a means of meeting people when socializing. Asking for a cigarette or a light provided a credible means for approaching someone and for finding some common ground with that other smoker (MacFadyen et al. 2003: 494). In some instances, people may even feign the need for a lighter or a cigarette just as an excuse to talk to someone they may not know and to flirt or establish flirtation.

As Allison described:

For girls, this is a way of flirting. You might have a lighter but will purposely ask for a lighter to get to know a stranger. It doesn’t matter where you are; it’s a great way to initiate a conversation. And, if the person lights the cigarette for you, then you know they’re interested and feel the same way (February 27, 2005).

In the cases that Allison discussed, young women may actually hide their lighters in order to flirt with men they find attractive. In these instances, cigarettes and lighters are used as sexual props as well, because students are employing the cigarettes and lighters as a way to enter into a conversation with members of the opposite sex in hopes of making sexual conquests.
As described in Chapter 3, students view their college years as a liminal period when almost any behavior is acceptable and can be justified. Specifically, one of the most often cited acceptable behaviors is "sleeping around," where students have sexual intercourse with any number of partners. "Sleeping around" is justified as a normal activity for many college students, and having a high number of partners often reflects a student who is just "experimenting with college" (Interview with Dan; February 18, 2005).

Since bummimg cigarettes and asking for lighters is often used as a way to establish a relationship with someone or to flirt with a member of the opposite sex, many college students seem to resort to smoking as a way to make friends and meet potential sexual partners. A great example of this comes from a story that Heather told me about a male friend from her first year of college:

My freshman year I knew a non-smoker; I’ll call him Nathaniel. He would buy packs of cigarettes and carry them around wherever he went just so that he could bum them to girls, specifically at parties, whenever girls would ask for a cigarette. Nathaniel, however attractive he may have been on his own, got quite the positive response from the ladies wherever he went. He was a cigarette vending machine! And the ladies loved it! The moral of this story is that, “A pack in the back pocket keeps the girls in the sack!” (February 24, 2005)

This particular tale epitomizes the way cigarettes are used to meet people, especially at college parties. Even for non-smokers, the significant roles played by the cigarette and lighter in meeting new people and becoming popular among a certain crowd of people are well known. Since he was a non-smoker, Heather’s young friend evidently expected the girls he provided with cigarettes to reciprocate to him in other ways. Since a cigarette is expensive and rarely handed over freely, without implying some type of reciprocal
obligation, this young man used other people’s smoking addiction to ensure that he would make the most of his college experience.

Because cigarettes are objects so imbued with the cultural notion of reciprocity, they develop and continue social cohesion, building the community of students on campus one smoker at a time. This reciprocal aspect of cigarette smoking makes quitting difficult for students while they are in college. It would be hard for a student to quit smoking and remove him or herself from the circle of friends that was previously established through smoking. If a person should quit smoking, chances are that he or she would continue to be offered cigarettes by friends and acquaintances in the smoking circles that are regularly seen outside of academic buildings and libraries on each campus. If the former smoker was no longer offered cigarettes, then the friendships that were founded on their mutual cigarette habit could disintegrate and leave the student either desirous of starting to smoke again, or feeling completely removed from his or her familiar social group on campus. Because there are social consequences of quitting during the college years, the cessation process is even more difficult to attempt during this moment. Because of this, many will neglect or even ignore the potential health effects of smoking in favor of the social connectedness that comes from the habit. Instead, the students’ goal tends to be set to quit after college when the process seems more plausible because they are entering new social situations.

Beyond the social connectedness that college students desire to achieve through cigarette smoking, females often have other societal pressures that necessitate their dependency on cigarettes. When talking with my informants, both the men and women in my study described common beliefs that smoking can assist in weight-loss or help
maintain a certain weight. Frequently, these ideas can increase or encourage a student’s desire to smoke. While the men of my study acknowledged the connection between smoking and dieting, using smoking for this purpose is more often considered a woman’s issue. For many women, notions of thinness and sexual attractiveness are tied into smoking and can influence their cigarette habit. These themes will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter.
\* Chapter 6 *

"Smoking and Dieting"

Pressures to be Thin

During college, many young adults establish behaviors that will become entrenched in their lives for years to come. These behaviors can include healthy or unhealthy eating habits, exercising, alcohol consumption, usage of illegal drugs and cigarette smoking. While many students consider their bad habits to be something limited to the college years, there are some habits, such as cigarette smoking, that are addictive and will very likely extend beyond the four years of college. Cigarette smoking is a particularly addictive behavior that may continue beyond the scope of college. In previous chapters of the thesis, the discussions have centered around some of the social reasons why cigarette smoking is so prevalent on college campuses. Beyond these social components of smoking, there is one tied to gender. Many college students -- primarily females -- depend on cigarette smoking as a form of dieting or as a means to control and manage their weight. Issues concerning both weight gain and weight loss are connected to cigarette smoking and can encourage a student’s smoking habit or even cause a student to become addicted to cigarettes in the first place.

Many female college students view smoking as a method to curb their appetites and suppress cravings for food. Because they believe cigarettes are effective diet aids, women will depend on cigarettes as a substitute for eating throughout the day. Studies show that women in the United States typically show greater concern about their weight than their male counterparts (George and Johnson 2001:115). Women more frequently
fear being fat, especially during college, when there is a large amount of social pressure for women to look their most attractive. In order to be considered attractive, a college-aged woman must fit the thin standards. In one of our interviews, Dana discussed how college-aged women are pressured over issues of weight and beauty:

During college is when we are considered to look the best during our life. This is when girls are hot, therefore no one wants to gain weight. Society will not appreciate a fat person for her looks. Even when a girl has a pretty face, people see the fat first and disregard a girl as being attractive (Jan. 28, 2005).

Because of societal pressures and ideals of thinness, women are forced to examine their weight closely, and a number of reports have suggested that smoking can be used as a way to manage one’s weight (cf. George and Johnson 2001: 116). While there have been studies to examine whether women use smoking as a primary way to control their weight, the results have proved inconsequential. Only 4% of women from George and Johnson’s study smoked cigarettes in order to control any weight gain. However, women in the study did believe that smoking cigarettes helps to keep their weight down (George and Johnson 2001:116). As Dan told me, “Girls hear that [smoking] makes them skinnier or will make them eat less, and then they want to smoke even more” (February 18, 2005).

Dan’s statement illustrates that men, too, talk about smoking, dieting, and the proverbial weight gain upon quitting. However, their conversations focus on dieting and weight-loss as a woman’s problem. In Hesse-Biber’s surveys of college students, she found, “given the premium placed on looking good, and the fear of its opposite, a greater degree of dissatisfaction with body weight and shape among women” (Hesse-Biber 1996: 61). When the men in my study did comment on using smoking as a diet strategy, they repeatedly told me that only women used smoking to maintain their weight. Concerns
about gaining a substantial amount of weight after quitting was also regarded as a fear only women suffer from. While my male informants heard of the possible weight gain associated with giving up cigarettes, none admitted this as a barrier to quitting. As Jason told me, “I smoke because I enjoy it, not because it has anything to do with my weight. While I have heard that you gain a lot of weight when you quit, that is not the reason I haven’t quit yet. I haven’t quit because I enjoy smoking” (February 27, 2005).

The assumption that smoking will make women eat less is reinforced by women who frequently use cigarettes as a way to curb their appetite. In a conversation with Christie, for example, she suggested the idea that women use cigarettes to distract themselves from food:

It’s a fact that smoking curbs your appetite. I do think that deep down girls smoke partially due to the fact that they know they will lose weight. I have heard of girls that will go outside for a cigarette break because they are hungry and need something to hold them over instead of caving into their desire for food (February 15, 2005).

Too often, this focus on denying the body food when it is hungry can lead to eating disorders and other health problems. Sufferers from eating disorders are characterized by their major concerns with body-weight and shape, but also show a strong connection to smoking because it provides an alternative oral activity to eating (cf. Crisp et al. 1999: 658). As John explained to me, his opinion is that the body is able to run on nicotine because the drug supplies energy. He notes:

Nicotine actually gives you energy, like caffeine, and the way it works is that your body will process the nicotine the same way as any other chemical. And your body will run on that. Basically, the way I got through finals was on nothing but coffee and cigarettes. And you can live off of that (March 7, 2005).
Like John, many students will opt to deny food in favor of a cigarette. Not only do cigarettes suppress the appetite, but, as John described, the cigarette may give people energy, or the illusion of energy, and decrease their need for food. As Allison has reduced the number of cigarettes she allows herself to smoke, in hopes of being able to completely quit sometime soon, she has started to replace cigarettes with food. She explained this to me:

I know I’ve significantly cut down the number of cigarettes I smoke, and I do tend to eat a lot more because if I can’t put a cigarette in my mouth then I will eat more food. But I never smoked instead of eating something (February 27, 2005).

Here, Allison discusses the important notion that, when people do try to stop smoking, they feel the need to replace their cigarettes with another type of oral fixation. This fixation usually takes the form of food. Allison has started to depend on food to satisfy the urge to have something constantly in her mouth. In this same way, women may use cigarettes as a substitute for their desire for food and to suppress hunger pangs. Dana, for instance, uses cigarettes as a method to curb her appetite and as something to do other than snacking when she is in her dorm room. As she told me:

Cigarettes suppress your appetite. For instance, instead of munching on popcorn when I’m watching TV, I’d smoke a cigarette instead of munching. Girls will sometimes smoke to divert their attention away from food. If I just ate an hour or so ago and my eyes fall on some chocolate in my room, I will go outside and smoke a cigarette instead so that I won’t eat it and then this will suppress my appetite. And that works (January 28, 2005).

Using cigarettes in this manner only increases the unhealthy effects of smoking. Not only are the cigarettes depositing harmful chemicals and carcinogens into the body, but women, more so than men, are also depending on the cigarettes to help them meet some skewed body ideal. This seems to identify a notion among young women that eating
when hungry and consuming calories from food is a worse alternative to smoking and possibly causing permanent harm to one’s body.

Since the 1920’s, cigarette smoking advertisements have been tailored to appeal to women, beginning with the Lucky Strike brand’s campaign, “Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet” (Boyd et al. 2000: 24). More recent cigarette advertisements include the Virginia Slims brand, which through its very name portrays women as slim, stylish, and sophisticated, an image with which many women wish to identify. The images representing the Virginia Slims brand conveys the message that women who smoke these cigarettes are independent and trim (Boyd et al. 2000: 26). Advertisements have long been an influential factor in causing people to smoke, though many people would not necessarily admit the influence of advertisements. As Christie said to me:

I think Marlboro and the whole tough cowboy image does it. That cowboy is really hot and appeals to women! People always think of the cowboy with Marlboro. I notice too, that with Virginia Slims advertisements it puts the message out that you’ll look glamorous and attractive when you smoke those cigarettes. I mean, I think it’s all about the image. I think people don’t want to admit that [smoking] is about the image, but the advertisements really do work (November 4, 2004).

Media influence has certainly continued over the years through advertisements appealing to the social, physical, and emotional desires of both men and women. In the case of women, the media influence has recognized and arguably perpetuated female anxieties about body size, causing many women to choose to smoke rather than to eat, as the Lucky Strike campaign long ago advised. Women who smoke rather than eat are opting to damage their internal body rather than take the risk of eating a piece of chocolate or some popcorn, which they believe could make them gain weight. That is, internal health is of less interest than what can be seen outside the body. According to college women I
interviewed, and, to a certain degree, to the greater society as a whole, gaining weight and becoming fat seems to be the worse risk. This illustrates the point that appearances on the outside of the body are of more concern than what is going on inside the body.

A disturbing component to this desire to smoke instead of eating comes from the societal pressures placed on women, especially to maintain an unrealistic ideal of thinness. While notions of ideal weight affect both men and women, during the college years women more frequently feel pressured to be thin. As Dana notes:

When you’re in college, it’s known that you’re supposed to look your best. I mean, if you look at the spring break videos of "Girls Gone Wild," when is there ever a picture of a fat, ugly girl going wild? Never! It’s the hot ones. So everyone knows that in college it is supposed to be your best-looking time (January 28, 2005).

The societal pressures that women feel to be thin come from all aspects of popular media, such as the "Girls Gone Wild" videos that my informant, Dana, mentioned. These videos depict the typical college female as thin, beautiful, and showing off her body during spring break, a time when college students are stereotypically expected to act crazy and unrestrained. Besides these videos, other types of mainstream television, and movies, popular magazines for young women, such as Glamour and Cosmopolitan, also showcase thin women as personifying the beauty ideal (McCleneghan 2003: 317). Since college-aged women are inundated with media representations of glamorous, sexy, and always thin women, they become fixated on the idea of being thin themselves and succumb to various demands in hope of obtaining the thin body type.

Women have a need to control their bodies by controlling the amount of food they consume. Women believe they need to control the body, to train it, and to force it to use techniques -- such as smoking cigarettes -- to construct, in the flesh, an ideal body type.
As my female informants have suggested, this fear of “becoming fat and getting big” permeates all of their actions. Susan Bordo notes that such women’s anxiety over hunger appears to peak during periods when women are becoming independent and asserting themselves politically and socially (Bordo1993:161). One such moment of female independence occurs during the college years, when both men and women are living on their own for the first time, learning new ideas and theories that stimulate their intellectual growth. During this time period, as per Bordo, fears concerning women’s weight also emerge and may even escalate. Nearly every woman I spoke to wishes to control her body, maintain an ideal weight or lose weight. Of these women, no one wants to gain any substantial amount of weight and become a heavy person, as this is often detrimental to a woman’s status, specifically during college.

Being fat, according to many of my informants, is equal to being at the bottom of the social ladder. As Dana explained:

Society perpetuates this fear of fat. I’m not against fat people, but how often is a fat person appreciated for her looks? I had a best friend who was large and she had such a pretty face, but no guys ever noticed it. Now she lost a lot of weight and people notice her and say how pretty she is. Society views people as fat and not as people. They see the fat first. And so no one wants to be in that state. Society construes this idea that fat is bad. And only thin is good. Therefore girls won’t stop [smoking] because they fear getting fat. This is an incentive to not stop smoking. Girls don’t want to quit and be fat. Society construes the idea the fat is bad and thin is good. A guy with a beer belly can still be hot or cute. Big is good for guys, but it is bad for girls (January 28, 2005).

In this conversation Dana mentions many important notions surrounding a woman’s fear of becoming fat. Since a heavy person is not viewed as a person, but rather as the quality of fat, no one wants to become a mound of insignificant flesh. For a college-aged, heterosexual woman, who is often concerned with appealing to and attracting men,
becoming fat would be detrimental to her dating lifestyle. Studies indicate that “many women experience even a few extra pounds as a major issue in their lives; they tend to weigh themselves frequently and report seeking medical help for weight problems more often than men” (Hesse-Biber 1996: 59).

As Dana noted to me, a heavier woman will be ignored, despite having pretty features. As society reinforces the positive image of thinness, females are taught from a young age and on that attractiveness is a priority in life and that maintaining a slender and svelte body is critical to being attractive (cf. Klesges and Meyers 1989: 145). Besides young girls being taught that thinness is linked with attractiveness, stereotypes showcasing fatness as a “bad” quality and a reason to dislike people are internalized at a very young age (Nichter 2000: 35). Children consistently like thinner bodies better and attribute to these individuals positive characteristics, rather than the negative characteristics that are associated with obese individuals.

With the fear of becoming fat and being ignored as a person, many college women will smoke cigarettes as a way to maintain their weight. In addition, some women will completely ignore any possibility of quitting cigarette smoking during college out of the fear that they will gain weight once they stop smoking. As Dana mentioned, women will use their fear of becoming fat as an incentive to continue smoking, especially during the college years when a considerable amount of pressure is applied to women to be thin. Not only are girls expected to be thin during college, but college-aged women are considered to have the epitome of a youthful, slim, and tight body (Bordo 1993: 140). Therefore, one of the reasons people may start smoking or
return to smoking after an attempt at quitting, or may never even attempt to quit, is this fear of the effect of smoking on body weight (Weekley et al. 1992: 259).

Unfortunately, anxiety about a significant weight gain upon quitting smoking causes many young women to continue the habit. The fear of gaining weight may, indeed be the most important deterrent against smoking cessation for college-aged women. These women’s fear of weight gain encourages them to continue to smoke rather than risk any negative change to their appearance. Dana described how her own fear of weight gain keeps her from reaching this desirable goal:

I am scared that I would quit and put on all this weight. That’s what happens when you quit smoking. It’s the general thing that after you quit you’ll gain weight. When you stop smoking cigarettes you start munching on things again (January 28, 2005).

For many of my informants, like Dana, the fear of eating acts as a barrier to quitting smoking. While talking with Heather, she also admitted that after she quit smoking, she began to eat “a good amount more than usual.” Heather has also realized that her desire for food is a replacement of the oral fixation of smoking with another oral pastime, such as snacking (February 24, 2005). All of these women fear a loss of bodily control in giving up cigarette smoking. Smoke is consumed only briefly through a cigarette, while food is seen as a potentially permanent acquisition. Although Heather has not experienced a significant weight gain after giving up cigarettes, her experience with the desire to consume more food after she quit smoking may, in fact, reinforce the fear of a weight gain in other women. When a woman sees another woman who has quit smoking and then who confesses to a desire for more food, it creates additional fear that she will exchange dependencies and also gain weight. This knowledge may reinforce another smoker’s habit while simultaneously destroying any hope that she could successfully quit
smoking. Beyond the personal accounts of weight gain, studies do substantiate these results. Upon smoking cessation, some studies suggest an increased food intake and a lowered metabolic rate that causes weight gain among some individuals (Jarry et al. 1997: 61). Other studies, however, indicate a weight gain that peaks within two years of smoking cessation but then returns to a baseline weight as observed in non-smokers (Froom et al. 1998: 462). Because of the evidentiary support to the knowledge of gaining weight after giving up tobacco, it increases the difficulty of quitting for many women.

When Kate’s roommate decided to quit smoking, she suffered from the fear of gaining large amounts of weight. As Kate told me:

My roommate was going to try and quit again. But before she did, she started watching what she was eating and began eating really carefully and working out like crazy. And she did all of this because she was terrified she was going to gain a ton of weight when she quit. And she’s smoking again now, which happened a few months after she tried to quit, but I notice that she doesn’t go to the gym now and she doesn’t watch what she eats so much, either (February 17, 2005).

Kate’s roommate apparently uses cigarettes as a way to maintain and control her weight, instead of making healthy food choices and working out on a regular basis. But upon considering the goal of quitting, she realized she could no longer depend on cigarettes in this way and decided to look elsewhere to maintain her physique. This illustrates how smoking is seen as a panacea because it saves women from the rigorous work of dieting and exercise. Some women are under the illusion that one bad habit enables control over the body in other areas. Allison also had a friend who “wanted to quit, but she said ‘Yeah, but if I quit, then I’ll get fatter and bigger.’ And so she didn’t quit” (February 27, 2005). In this instance, the thought of gaining weight seemed a worse possibility than continuing to smoke cigarettes.
While the fear of gaining weight may not keep all women from giving up tobacco, my informants have made it apparent that the proverbial weight gain after quitting is a major concern for college-aged women. For other women, the worry over gaining additional weight may be a factor in their decision to quit smoking, but as Allison tells me, it may not be the deciding factor. She noted:

Girls are afraid to quit because they’re scared to gain a lot of weight, but I don’t think it’s the deciding factor. I mean, they don’t quit because they’re addicted and quitting is too hard. It is definitely an excuse not to quit than a reason not to quit (February 27, 2005).

For some women, a weight gain after smoking cessation is something they wish to avoid and they do so by continuing to smoke. However, for other women, the associated weight gain is of concern, but is not enough of a deterrent to make them continue to smoke cigarettes. In Nichter’s study of American high school girls’ ideas about weight and dieting, not being able to control a food addiction was seen as a sign of weakness. Similarly, these girls also believed they should be able to control their dependence on cigarettes rather than have smoking control them (Nichter 2000: 42). This finding is confirmatory of what I have discovered in my own study: hearing that many young, college-aged women will continue to smoke rather than risk any weight gain. This paradoxical notion allows women to believe their addiction has given them control over food. Smoking cigarettes is an “addiction with benefits” because it enables women to keep their weight down. The understanding that one addiction might equate control in another, presumably important are of a woman’s life, reinforces smoking. Therefore, many women will continue to smoke as a way to control their weight and maintain a thin body rather than alter their outward appearance.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

Throughout the body of this thesis, I examined the role of cigarette smoking on college campuses, specifically focusing on how cigarette smoking fits into the college lifestyle. I examined reasons for the high incidence of students who smoke and reasons why quitting seems nearly impossible during the college years. The most prominent factor that emerged from this research is how cigarettes socially bring together students of the college community. In socially unifying students, cigarettes can help students feel as though they belong to the college lifestyle by “fitting in” with the social surroundings and taking part in the allure of smoking. In addition to this, smoking generates friendships among students and provides access to social groups. Through reciprocity, students then establish themselves as members of a social group on campus and feel a deep connection with their peers. This obligatory exchange fosters and cultivates friendships among the individuals in the campus smoking community. The idea of weight-loss can also bring female students together with the similar goals of maintaining their figures and attractiveness. All of these aspects of smoking, however, are connected through the underlying theme of liminality. Because students view their years in college as a transitional period where “college is not the real world,” students will engage in unhealthy behaviors. Students then justify these behaviors to themselves because college is the time to “let loose” and “experiment.”

As a result of my research, I have a sense that the responses of my informants were never affected by the school they attended. As I reviewed the information my informants provided, there was a real homogeneity of the responses. In my analysis, it
appears that these themes are overall representative of students in college rather than students attending either Franklin & Marshall College or York College. The results of my research indicate that these social aspects of cigarette smoking are in the realm of national culture and not local culture.

From a public health standpoint, it is essential to develop effective smoking cessation programs. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect upon these social issues as well as the addiction to nicotine. At this point, most smoking cessation programs offer a support group and the tools to help the smoker cope with the withdrawal effects of the nicotine. While gum and patches may be effective in helping to suppress withdrawal symptoms, the social side effects of cigarette smoking must also be taken into consideration.

Gender Differences

I entered my research fully expecting some type of gender difference to become apparent in the cigarette habits of males and females. As I expected, some differences between the genders did emerge. Although I observed an approximately equal number of males and females who were regular smokers, the “social smokers,” those students who consider themselves to be non-smokers but light up a cigarette at parties, consistently were mostly female rather than male. While Allison and Dana did remark on the frequency of females that use cigarette smoking as a way to introduce themselves to the males on campus, I am not positive whether using cigarettes for flirting purposes produces an accurate representation of why women use cigarettes more than men in social scenes. While males are also seen to flirt with females using cigarettes, having the
excuse, or prop, of a cigarette may give females more confidence in approaching a potential male partner and reduce the risk of rejection in these situations. Males more commonly approach females of interest at the social scenes on campus, and so females may in turn wish to increase their own power in meeting males and use cigarettes as a safe and often effective crutch.

The biggest difference in gender came about in relation to issues regarding weight-loss. It was interesting that in my conversation with Dan, he mentioned, before I had even approached the topic, the notion that women believe cigarette smoking will help them control their weight or even lose weight. Coming from a male informant, this illuminates the dichotomy between male and female smokers, especially in regard to the possibility of quitting. My male informants always hurriedly assured me that their own weight was not of concern to them and would most definitely not be considered as a factor in deciding whether or not to quit smoking. While this quick response could identify the cultural standards that weight issues are only to concern women, it may also indicate that a concern with weight gain may also, in fact, disturb men as much as women, though they are less inclined to discuss the topic.

Gendered difference was also commonly illustrated by the brand of cigarettes that men and women preferred. More of my female informants enjoyed smoking Marlboro Lights, while my male informants enjoyed various other brands, including Camel and regular Marlboro brands. Interestingly, as Rachel told me, “Marlboro Lights are like the Diet Coke of cigarettes,” which elucidates the notion that women seem to be more concerned about their health. A Diet Coke is often considered to be “guilt-free” because it has no calories and offers a healthier alternative to the high caloric content of a regular
soft drink. By associating the light version of the cigarette to a Diet Coke, Rachel reveals the idea that women are attempting to enjoy a healthier cigarette. While there are no healthy cigarettes, the Lights do offer lower levels of carcinogens and give the illusion of being better for the smoker’s health. However, these cigarettes are not as popular among the men because of their decreased flavor and taste, as John told me.

While gender is not a determining factor of who smokes cigarettes on a college campus, it is in fact indicative of some of the reasons and underlying issues why a particular college student may smoke. There are different pressures that affect both males and females and cause students to make the decision to smoke cigarettes during college.

Students’ Perceptions

Cigarette smoking was an easy topic to approach when talking with students at Franklin & Marshall College and York College. This is a subject nearly all students have some opinion about, and I found that students were exceptionally interested in the nature of my project and expressed a desire to participate. Almost everyone I met was willing, even eager, to talk about cigarette smoking and readily agreed with the necessity for this type of work. While students were able to recognize cigarette smoking as having an important role on a college campus, they often found it difficult to pinpoint the specific roles of cigarettes. After asking certain questions and pressing on various topics with my informants, I often had the response of “that’s so fascinating,” or “I had never thought of it that way before.” These responses led me to believe that while numerous students participate in the reciprocal exchange of cigarettes and rely on the social connections that
arise from cigarette smoking, most are unaware that cigarettes work in this manner. Students may only view cigarettes as a way to reduce stress and offer some sort of comfort in certain social situations.

In nearly all of my ethnographic interviews, student smokers frequently professed some sort of guilt for their smoking habit. There was a general feeling of hypocrisy as students acknowledged the harmful health effects that arise from smoking, yet opted to ignore these concerns in favor of smoking. While the point of my research was not to ask students to abstain from cigarette smoking or attempt to quit, I found it interesting that most of my informants themselves brought forth the topic of quitting smoking. When I then took the cue to ask about quitting smoking, many students admitted disregarding the possibility until after college graduation, claiming that quitting while still enrolled in college is “nearly impossible.” This common desire to delay quitting smoking until after college illustrates the need for better and more effective programming that can aid students in quitting smoking.

As I demonstrated, it can be difficult for college students to attempt to quit smoking and remove themselves from the social circle and community that has been established through cigarette smoking. Cigarettes play an integral role in the risk-taking behaviors that are associated with the liminal period of the college years, making cigarettes a popular choice for rebellion and danger that students so often seek out. Students also use cigarettes to build and establish friendships, meet new people on campus, and develop the communal atmosphere that students strive for during college. Reciprocitv aids in this development, and if a student should find him or herself without a cigarette, there are many other students on campus who will be willing to give someone a
cigarette, thereby drawing the student back into the smoking community. Even through
dieting approaches, females will bond together and smoke cigarettes with one another as
a way to suppress their appetites and foster the friendships between women. The support
system and friendships that arise from cigarette smoking make it difficult for students on
a college campus to quit smoking.

I think smokers can benefit from my research to understand the ways in which
cigarette smoking becomes embedded in their college lives. I believe my research can
make apparent how embedded cigarettes are in the lives of college students. By
illustrating and identifying the roles that cigarettes play during college, my research can
help to prepare students if they wish to quit smoking while also making them aware of
the difficulties that will be faced in the social aspects of college.

Besides benefiting smokers, my research will also help non-smokers to identify
with and empathize with their smoking counterparts on campus. I frequently heard
frustrated remarks from my smoking informants that “non-smokers just give
disapproving looks” and look down upon someone for his or her addiction to cigarettes. I
hope that my thesis brings some light to the cigarette smoking culture on campus and
helps to make non-smokers aware of the various reasons why a person may choose to
smoke. Other smoking informants have described how “non-smokers, even if they don’t
know me, will walk up to me and tell me how unhealthy smoking is for me!” According
to my informants, these comments are unfair and inappropriate judgments for non-
smokers to make about their peers on campus, and I hope that my thesis offers more
insight to the social reasons why a person may be smoking.
As I noted earlier, I did not write this thesis in order to pressure smokers to quit smoking, to ask them to abstain from smoking for a length of time, or to make them feel immoral or inferior. I do not wish to place judgments on those students who smoke at either Franklin & Marshall College or York College. I simply hope this thesis illuminates the various roles of cigarette smoking on college campuses and displays how cigarette smoking has become entrenched in the lives of college students.
Appendix A

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me for my research project. Before proceeding, I would like to take this time to set some guidelines for the research. In my study, I am looking at the smoking epidemic on college campuses. I will examine why some students choose to smoke and others do not, and why so many people are drawn to this habit during their college years. The objective of my research is to understand the smoking culture and learn about this behavior. Please realize that if you are a smoker, I have no intent on trying to persuade you to quit or enroll you in any type of smoking cessation program. As a result of this, I hope we can have honest and open conversations about smoking.

Throughout all of my research you have the right to know my objectives and ask questions about any aspect of this ethnographic study. For the entire project I will assure your confidentiality and keep you anonymous. I do anticipate using voice recording devices as well as taking some digital photography, but again assure your confidentiality. If you should need to reach me for anything throughout the project, please do not hesitate to send me an e-mail at: Michelle.Woltkamp@fandm.edu

Please give me your consent with the following choices:

___ Yes, you may take my photo during your research
___ No, you may not take my photo
___ Yes, you may record our conversations during your research
___ No, you may not record our conversations

Please list any stipulations or specifications that you would like me to adhere to during this research in order to protect your identity and make you feel most comfortable.

______________________________  ________________________
Signature  Date
Appendix B

Age _______  Email ____________________________

Graduation Year _______

I am conducting research at Franklin and Marshall College. From this survey I would like to gather a group of informants to talk with me about their smoking and non-smoking behaviors. These discussions would be kept completely confidential and information would be used for my personal research project only.

Would you agree to become one of my informants and talk with me in further detail about your smoking habit or your non-smoking habit? May I contact you for an interview?

1. Do you consider yourself to be a smoker? Y or N

*If yes, please continue filling out questions 2-9. If no, then please jump ahead and answer question number 10-12.

2. Approximately how many cigarettes do you smoke on a daily basis?

3. What age did you begin smoking?

4. How would you say this habit started?

5. Have you ever tried to quit smoking?

6. Are you concerned about your health due to your smoking habit?

7. Why do you smoke?

8. Do most of your college friends smoke?
Appendix B

9. Are there social pressures to smoke at college?

Non-Smokers:

10. Have you ever smoked cigarettes?

11. Have you ever had a desire to smoke? If so, Why?

12. Did you ever feel pressured to smoke in college?

13. Are most of your friends smokers or non-smokers?

14. Why have you been able to resist smoking?

15. Do you believe cigarette smoking is a concern on college campuses?
1. MUSIC, ART & COMMUNICATIONS CTR.
2. CAMPBELL HALL
3. LIFE-SCIENCES & ANNEX BUILDINGS
4. BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION BLDG.
5. SCHMIDT LIBRARY
6. WOLF GYMNASIUM
7. GYMNASIUM B
8. WOLF ACADEMIC CENTER
9. IOSUE STUDENT UNION
10. COLLEGE BOOKSTORE
11. MILLER ADMINISTRATION BLDG.
12. MANOR HALL NORTH
13. MANOR HALL WEST
14. MANOR HALL SOUTH
15. MANOR HALL EAST
16. MANOR HALL NORTHEAST
17. SPRINGDALE HALL
18. BROUGHER CHAPEL
19. PRESIDENT'S HOME
20. PERSHING HOUSE
21. SPRINGETTSBURY HALL
22. SUSQUEHANNA HALL
23. CODORUS HALL
24. PENN HALL
25. EVERGREEN HALL
26. WILLOW HALL
27. LAUREL HALL
28. BEARD HALL
29. HONORS HOUSE
30. TYLER RUN APTS. I
31. TYLER RUN APTS. II
32. TYLER RUN APTS. III
33. GROUNDS BUILDING
34. ARNOLD HOUSE
35. WENGER HOUSE
36. CURRY HOUSE
37. KIEFFER HOUSE
38. COUNTRY CLUB MANOR APTS.
39. McKay HALL
40. NURSING EDUCATION CENTER
41. SPRING GARDEN APTS.
42. BROCKIE COMMONS

PARKING
A ADMISSIONS
V VISITORS

Figure 1