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Smoking Motivation in the Face of Stigmatization: A Bourdieusian Analysis of Impressions

Running head: Smoking motivation in the face of stigmatization

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Abstract

Earlier research from Western countries indicates that individuals with low socioeconomic status initiate tobacco smoking even though smoking is a stigmatized practice. We propose that theoretical developments of Bourdieu's theories on capital can reveal a plausible mechanism that explains smoking motivation in the face of stigmatization, and we perform a double-blind randomized controlled experiment with the impressions of a smoking adolescent girl to test and elaborate on our proposition. The empirical data was collected through questionnaires distributed to 622 Swedish adolescents during the fall of 2015. Half the questionnaires included a picture of a smoking girl and half the questionnaires included an identical picture without the act of smoking. Binary logistic regressions indicate that the girl on the picture was perceived as significantly less likable, more popular, less kind, less compassionate, more deceitful, more conceited, and more liable to bully when she smoked a cigarette compared to when she did not smoke. The theoretical analysis implies that adolescents with low socioeconomic status may seek to smoke in the face of stigmatization because of a motivating mechanism that functions in accordance with Bourdieu's economic logic of action. The concluding section presents implications for tobacco-control policies.

Keywords: stigma, tobacco smoking, Bourdieu, impression, tobacco control

Introduction

Tobacco smoking is widely recognized as a devastating custom for public health (WHO, 2009, 2012). In order to reduce tobacco consumption, public-health policies have increasingly made use of stigma to compel smoking cessation (Bayer, 2008; Bayer & Stuber, 2006), and despite the once normative status of smoking (Pampel, 2005), stigmatization of smokers has now become nearly ubiquitous in Western societies (Bell, McCullough, Salmon, & Bell, 2010; Evance-Polce, Castaldelli-Maia, Schomerus, & Evans-Lacko, 2015). However, the actual effectiveness of stigmatization on tobacco cessation remains a contested issue. Stigmatization of smoking motivates some smokers to stop consuming tobacco, but stigmatization simultaneously prevents other smokers from seeking cessation support (Bell, Salmon, Bowers, Bell, & McCullough, 2010; Evance-Polce *et al.*, 2015, p. 31). In general, individuals that quit smoking due to stigmatization have a higher socioeconomic status, whereas individuals that persist in smoking despite stigmatization are found lower on the socioeconomic ladder (Bell, Salmon, *et al.*, 2010; Graham, 2012).

The international academic debate has not yet produced any convincing accounts of the social mechanisms that motivate individuals in lower socioeconomic groups to smoke tobacco in the face of stigmatization. Some earlier research has focused on the various difficulties of smoking cessation faced by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (e.g. Bell, Salmon, *et al.*, 2010; Bond, Brough, Spurling, & Hayman, 2012), but the main cause of higher smoking levels among individuals with lower socioeconomic status is not cessation difficulties but the fact that new generations continuously take up the habit of smoking (Green, Leyland, Sweeting, & Benzeval, 2016; Maralani, 2013). Also, a number studies have argued that tobacco smoking remains a common practice in lower socioeconomic groups because individuals in these groups are relatively isolated from the

anti-tobacco norms endorsed by the majority populations (Ahern, Galea, Hubbard, & Syme, 2009; Schudson & Baykurt, 2016; Stead, MacAskill, MacKintosh, Reece, & Eadie, 2001). However, recent research indicates that smokers from all socioeconomic backgrounds are conscious of the stigmatizing effects of smoking (Bell, McCullough *et al.*, 2010; Evance-Polce *et al.*, 2015; Ritchie, Amos, & Martin, 2010), and the core presumption of the isolation argument is thereby rebuked.

Up to this date, no research has presented a cogent explanation of why individuals in lower socioeconomic groups decide to initiate the habit of smoking when they are conscious of the stigmatizing effects of tobacco usage. The current study aims to fill this research gap by delineating a plausible mechanism that may motivate individuals with low socioeconomic status to smoke in the face of stigmatization.

Theoretical developments

We propose that certain developments of Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1986, 1990) theory on *symbolic capital* can help indicate the mechanism that motivates actors with low socioeconomic status to perform stigmatizing smoking. Symbolic capital is one type of capital among several others, and it is distinguished by being a purely mental construct, with no physical form. According to Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1986, 1990), individuals perpetually seek to control a maximal amount of capital in any form that is available.

Our first theoretical development posits that symbolic capital is produced and reified through the display of objects or actions that emit certain impressions to observers. That is, *impressions generate symbolic capital*. This conception neatly combines Bourdieu's theory on symbolic capital with Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective, which constitutes one of the theoretical cornerstones of sociological research on stigmatization (Goffman, 1990). The understanding that impressions generate symbolic

capital is supported by various passages in Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1990) works, although Bourdieu himself never explicitly employs the term *impression*.

Symbolic capital is derived from certain impressions, but it is vital to notice that these impressions need not imply agreeability. The essence of Bourdieusian capital, in all its forms, is not positive regard but an ability to control other individuals' actions (see e.g. Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241), and accordingly, symbolic capital can be produced through any impressions that augment the social control exercised by an actor. In order to understand actors' interests in emitting certain impressions, it is necessary to determine what types of impression can reinforce social control by what means. Phrased differently, in order to grasp an actor's interests in emitting certain impressions, it is necessary to uncover the symbolic benefits from each type of impression through an analysis and classification of different subtypes of symbolic capital and adhering forms of social control.

In this article, we propose a rudimentary subdivision of symbolic capital into two contrasting subtypes, which, we argue, have enough analytical power to explain smoking initiation in the face of stigmatization: *symbolic virtue capital* and *symbolic power capital*. Symbolic virtue capital is generated by impressions of morality and normative behavior, and it constitutes a potent source of control over others' actions through its ability to invoke guilt and shame. An actor that presides over large amounts of symbolic virtue capital can tacitly obtain compliance from other individuals since these other individuals feel guilt or shame lest they defer to the wishes of the actor.

Symbolic power capital is an antithetical resource compared to symbolic virtue capital: it is produced through impressions of forcefulness and recklessness. The emotions that render symbolic power capital efficacious are neither guilt nor on shame but fear and intimidation. Actors that control substantial amounts of symbolic power capital are able to command and control other individuals' actions because other individuals are afraid of

neglecting and defying the actors' orders. An outline of the differences between symbolic virtue capital and symbolic power capital are presented in Table 1.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE.]

Because symbolic virtue capital and symbolic power capital are generated through contrasting impressions, we posit that an actor cannot produce both types of symbolic capital through the same act of emitting impressions. In fact, the production of either of the two types of symbolic capital, through the emittance of certain impressions, is liable to dissipate the other type of capital. For example, an individual that emits impressions of being merciful and honest will presumably gain symbolic virtue capital, but at the same time this individual is likely to lose symbolic power capital.

A crucial issue is to determine what individual will seek to accumulate what type of symbolic capital under what circumstances. This issue may be resolved by applying Bourdieu's (1990) theory of an *economic logic of action*. According to Bourdieu (1990, e.g. p. 122), individuals invariably act in accordance with an economic logic in the sense that they constantly seek to perform such actions that generate maximum capital given the resources and positions that they control. Resources and positions include, but are not limited to, social expectations and skills acquired from the necessity of coping with particular living conditions (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 377-380). Based on the economic logic of action we conclude that individuals seek to accumulate symbolic capital of such a type that they can generate most efficiently given their resources and positions. An individual that mostly has resources and positions apt for emitting impressions of normativity and morality will seek to generate symbolic virtue capital, and an individual that mostly has resources and positions apt for emitting impressions of forcefulness and recklessness will seek to generate symbolic power capital.

The last theoretical conclusion above indicates why some individuals find it attractive to perform normative actions and why some individuals prefer activities, such as smoking, that are denounced by large parts of society. Individuals that act normatively and abstain from smoking are likely to have the appropriate resources for accumulating symbolic virtue capital and deficient resources for producing symbolic power capital. Conversely, individuals that smoke and perform other stigmatizing actions are likely to have the appropriate resources for accumulating symbolic power capital and to lack the resources that are necessary for accumulating symbolic virtue capital.

Aim

In the current study, we aim to apply the theoretical developments of Bourdieu's theories, presented above, to the results of a double-blind randomized controlled experiment studying the impressions of a smoking adolescent girl. The focus on adolescents' smoking is warranted by the fact that smokers commonly initiate their habit during adolescence (Surgeon General, 2014, p. 708). The study will test if the theoretical developments can reveal a plausible mechanism that can motivate individuals with low socioeconomic status to smoke even when they understand that smoking causes stigmatization. Presuming that a plausible mechanism is found, the study will indicate through which specific impressions the mechanism appears to function. The grand aim of the study is to problematize and suggest improvements to current strategies of tobacco control that currently are unsuccessful at employing stigma to limit smoking in lower socioeconomic groups.

Methods

The empirical investigation of the study sought to determine what impressions adolescents experience when viewing a picture of a smoking adolescent girl. First, a qualitative pre-study was performed in order to develop relevant measures of impressions.

Thereafter, a double-blind randomized controlled experiment measured peers' impressions of the adolescent girl, who was presented with or without smoking on two different pictures.

Pre-study

The pre-study included five brief focus groups that were performed with Swedish adolescents during September and October of 2015. All secondary and upper secondary schools in a medium-sized Swedish city were contacted, and the first schools that accepted participation were included in the study. There were two focus groups with students from a secondary school and two focus groups with students from an upper secondary school. An additional focus group was conducted with female students from a second upper secondary school because, inadvertently, only males had been selected for both focus groups with students from the first upper secondary school. Classes in the schools were selected by administrative school personal, and participating students were systematically selected from their classes according to the alphabetical order of their family names. Five students were selected from each class, which resulted in five participants that were 13 years old, five that were 14 years old, four that were 16 years old, and eleven that were 17 years old (not all numbers of participants in the age groups were dividable by five since the participants had different birth dates across the same year). In total, the focus groups included eleven girls and fourteen boys. All participation was voluntary, and the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council were followed.

The focus groups were semi-structured and lasted approximately 15 minutes. Each focus group followed a brief interview guide that included five questions intended to elicit the attributes that participants commonly ascribed to girls of their own age. The questions were:

- “Imagine a girl of your own age that is a really good friend. What is she like?”

- “Imagine a girl of your own age that many fall in love with. What is she like?”
- “Imagine a girl of your own age that you definitely do not like. What is she like?”
- “Think of the most popular girls in your school. What are they like?”
- “Think of the least popular girls in your school. What are they like?”

A researcher collected the answers in brief notes without audio recordings. The five most frequently cited attributes were selected as relevant measures for the questionnaires used to collect data for the experiment.

Participants

The experiment targeted 771 students in two secondary schools and two upper secondary schools in a medium-sized Swedish city. All secondary schools and upper secondary schools in the city were contacted, and the two secondary schools and the two upper secondary schools that first accepted participation were included in the study. The schools from which students had participated in focus groups were excluded from participation in the experiment. From each grade in each school, a certain number of participating classes were selected in order to obtain subsamples of approximately 50 students. The school classes were selected by the administrative staff of the schools according to class schedules and the convenience of finding available time for questionnaire distribution. The randomness of the total sample was reduced by the fact that the school staff influenced the selection process, but by including and controlling for a number of individual attributes we limited the risk that the results were affected by a skewed representation of participants (see Table 2 and “Data analysis,” below).

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE.]

All students that were present in class at the times of distribution accepted to participate. Out of the 771 students in the selected classes, 634 students were in class at the time of distribution. The questionnaires from twelve students were excluded in class or

during the phase of data entry because the students had looked at other students' answers or because the students had written unserious answers that were mocking the questions of the questionnaires. There were 622 questionnaires eligible for inclusion in the final data set.

Procedure and ethical considerations

Pen-and-pencil questionnaires were distributed in class by a researcher. First, the researcher presented the aim of the study ("to investigate impressions of an adolescent girl") and conveyed the participation guidelines. The participation guidelines stressed participants' individual answers. By being physically present, the researcher could answer questions from participants and prevent misunderstandings of guidelines and questionnaire questions.

Before distributing the questionnaires, the researcher orally informed the participants of their terms of participation in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council. The Swedish Research Council stipulates that all participants must know the general aims of the research, that participation must be completely voluntary, that data management must be confidential and secure, that published results must not include information on the identities of participants, and that the data must not be used for any other purposes than the ones presented to the participants.

The current article is based on the primary author's degree project in sociology, and for this reason no formal review from an ethical committee was required or accessible according the Swedish ethical regulations of research. Nonetheless, the ethical committee at Karlstad University was informed about the project, and a spokesperson for the committee confirmed that the research project followed existing regulations and was not to be considered ethically precarious.

Measures

The focus groups presented in section 2.1 resulted in a compilation of five frequent attributes that the adolescents used to evaluate their peers. The attributes were: *conceited*, *kind*, *liable to bully*, *deceitful*, and *compassionate*. These five attributes and two types of popularity – *likability* and *perceived popularity* – formed the seven measures of impression that were included in the questionnaire. *Likability* refers to actual liking from peers whereas *perceived popularity* refers to perceptions of being influential in peer groups (Cillessen & Rose, 2005; Sandstrom & Cillessen, 2006).

In addition to the impression measures, the questionnaires included four measures of the characteristics of the respondents: *academic orientation*, *school grade*, *sex*, and *tobacco usage*. Academic orientation was used as a proxy measure of socioeconomic status under the presumption that intentions to study on a university level indicates higher socioeconomic status and intentions not to study on a university level indicates lower socioeconomic status. The use of academic orientation as a proxy measure for socioeconomic status has been successfully used in earlier research on adolescent smoking (Hagquist, 2000).

Questionnaire design and operationalization

Every second student received either a questionnaire in which the girl on the picture smoked or a questionnaire in which the girl on the picture did not smoke (see Fig. 1). The students freely determined their seating in the classrooms and were thereby randomly assigned to either type of picture. This method of random assignment precluded problems with assignment bias without having to use a conventional list of random numbers. The students were not informed that they received different types of picture, and the researchers did not know which students received which type of picture since the pictures were

enclosed in the questionnaires. The concealment of information from both participants and researchers ensured that the data collection was double-blind.

[INSERT FIG. 1 HERE.]

In the questionnaires, all impression measures were operationalized through statements. After each statement, the questionnaires included four fixed responses that indicated to what extent respondents believed the statement was accurate. The four available responses to each statement were “certainly not true,” “probably not true,” “probably true,” and “certainly true.” The following seven statements were included in the questionnaires (types of measure are indicated in parentheses):

- “You could start liking the girl on the picture and become close friends with her.”
(*likability*)
- “The girl on the picture is popular in her school.” (*perceived popularity*)
- “The girl on the picture is conceited and thinks that she is better than others.”
(*conceitedness*)
- “The girl on the picture is nice and likes helping others.” (*kindness*)
- “The girl on the picture is a bully that harasses others in order to benefit herself.”
(*liability to bully*)
- “The girl on the picture is deceitful and puts on shows.” (*deceitfulness*)
- “The girl on the picture is compassionate toward her friends.” (*compassion*)

In addition to the impression measures, the questionnaires collected information on participants’ school grades, sexes, tobacco usage, and academic orientation. The measures of participants’ school grades, sexes, and tobacco usage were collected through straightforward questions. The measure of academic orientation was operationalized through an open question that inquired about respondents’ intentions after having finished their current level of education (secondary school or upper secondary school). The written

responses were coded according to whether or not they indicated progression toward university studies.

Data analysis

In the current study, the main dependent variables are the impressions measures. The impression measures had categorical outcomes, which warranted logistic regressions. However, we could not perform ordinal logistic regressions with the original four answer categories for the impression measures, since this method of analysis had necessitated a conflation of agreeing and disagreeing answers in the reference category. In order to allow for binary logistic regressions, which could yield unambiguous indications of agreement or disagreement with the statements, the response categories were dichotomized into “not true”/“true.” Furthermore, to improve the consistency and clarity of the analysis, the response categories for participants’ academic orientation, school grades, and tobacco usage were dichotomized into “university”/“not university”, “secondary school”/“upper secondary school”, and “uses tobacco”/“never uses tobacco”, respectively.

The dichotomized impression measures were analyzed through binary logistic regressions in SPSS. In each regression, the binary variable *picture type* (with/without smoking) was included as a covariate because it was presumed to be an independent variable directly affecting the impression measures. Also, the dichotomized measures of participants’ *academic orientation*, *school grade*, *sex*, and *tobacco usage* were included as covariates in all regressions because they were presumed to have plausible moderating effects on the relationships between the *picture type* variable and the impression measures. All four measures of participants’ characteristics were consistently included independently of their predictive power in order to maximize the accuracy of the results. Interaction terms of *picture type* by the participant variables were included if they reached a significance of $p < .10$.

A logistic regression was performed with *tobacco usage* as the dependent variable in order to determine which respondents were most likely to consume tobacco. The included covariates were *academic orientation*, *school grade*, and *sex*. All measures were dichotomized (see above). Interaction terms between pairs of covariates were included if they reached a significance of $p < .10$.

The goodness of fit of all models were tested through the likelihood-ratio test and the Hosmer-Lemeshow test. All models presented in the study were found to predict results better than chance according to the likelihood-ratio test ($p < .05$), and none of the presented studies were rejected by the Hosmer-Lemeshow test ($p < .05$). Odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals were calculated for all covariates and interaction terms.

Results

Table 3 presents the main empirical findings of the study. The odds that participants experienced the studied impressions varied significantly depending on whether or not the girl on the picture smoked a cigarette. The girl on the picture was perceived as less likable ($p < .001$; OR = .207), more popular ($p < .01$; OR = 2.043), less kind ($p < .001$; OR = .212), less compassionate ($p < .01$; OR = .358), more deceitful ($p < .01$; OR = 2.561), more conceited ($p < .001$; OR = 3.667), and more liable to bully ($p < .001$; OR = 3.664) when she smoked a cigarette compared to when she did not smoke a cigarette.

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE.]

The interaction terms in Table 3 reveal that females, students in secondary school, and participants that never used tobacco reacted most strongly to the inclusion/exclusion of the act of smoking. Students in secondary school perceived the girl on the picture as much less likable and much less kind when she smoked a cigarette. Females perceived the girl as much less likable, much less kind, much less compassionate, and much more deceitful when she smoked a cigarette. Finally, participants that never used tobacco perceived the

girl on the picture as much less likable and much more popular when she smoked a cigarette.

Respondents' academic orientation did not significantly interact with the inclusion/exclusion of the act of smoking when predicting the impressions of the girl on the picture. In other words, respondents that aimed to study on a university level and respondents that did not aim to study on a university level were affected in similar manners by the girl's act of smoking.

Table 4 presents the results of the logistic regression with tobacco consumption as the dependent variable. Tobacco consumption was most common among respondents that did not aim for university studies ($p < .001$; OR = 3.528), that studied in upper secondary school ($p < .001$; OR = 5.081), and that were female ($p < .05$; OR = 1.843). There were no interaction terms passing the criteria of $p < .10$.

[INSERT TABLE 4 HERE.]

Discussion

The current study aims to test if the theoretical developments presented in the introduction can reveal a plausible motivating mechanism of smoking in the face of stigmatization. In order to fulfill this aim, the following section presents an application of the theoretical developments to the results of the empirical experiment.

Smoking and symbolic virtue capital

Based on the impressions that the girl on the picture emits when she smokes, compared to when she does not smoke, we infer that *the girl on the picture loses symbolic virtue capital when she performs the act of smoking*. The girl is perceived as less likable, more popular, less kind, less compassionate, more deceitful, more conceited, and more liable to bully when she smokes a cigarette. It may seem contradictory that the girl is perceived as more popular at the same time as she is regarded as less likable, but earlier

research on social networks has in fact indicated that perceived popularity and likability are two different constructs and that perceived popularity, unlike likability, is related to immoral behavior (e.g. Cillessen & Rose, 2005; Sandstrom & Cillessen, 2006). We conclude that the girl becomes stigmatized by the act of smoking in the sense that she emits impressions of being less normative and less moral. Because an individual's symbolic virtue capital is a direct reflection of the individual's impressions of morality and normativity, the smoking girl on the picture loses symbolic virtue capital when she conveys less normative and less moral impressions. As was noted in the introduction, having little symbolic virtue capital means having a limited ability to control others' actions through emotions of guilt and shame. The girl on the picture loses control over peers' actions when she smokes because her peers become less likely to feel guilt or shame if they act in an aggressive or indifferent manner toward her.

An analysis of the act of smoking that exclusively focuses on symbolic virtue capital implies that smoking is dysfunctional and unfavorable to smokers. In order to convey a plausible explanation of why actors may be motivated to smoke, it is necessary to broaden the picture and include an analysis of symbolic power capital.

Smoking and symbolic power capital

According to the impressions that are emitted by the girl's act of smoking, it is clear that *the girl on the picture gains symbolic power capital through the act of smoking*. Symbolic power capital is generated through impressions of less kindness, less compassion, more deceitfulness, more conceitedness, and a higher liability to bully. These impressions indicate that the girl on the picture lacks moral restraints and can strike recklessly against those who defy her, which engenders fear among other individuals. By being able to invoke fear, the smoking girl on the picture gains control over other individuals' actions.

Furthermore, the smoking girl's symbolic power capital is increased by her impressions of having relatively high popularity. Presumably, popularity can be conceived of as a type of social forcefulness because popularity implies the existence of allies in case of a conflict. By being perceived as more popular when smoking, the girl on the picture is likely to engender fearful respect in other individuals and to gain an increased ability to control their actions.

Thus, contrary to the conclusions based on the concept of symbolic virtue capital, smoking appears beneficial when analyzed according to the concept of symbolic power capital. The girl on the picture loses symbolic virtue capital but gains symbolic power capital when she performs the act of smoking.

A plausible motivating mechanism

According to the conclusions above, the adolescent girl on the picture may be motivated to take up the habit of smoking because she seeks to gain symbolic power capital. However, the girl on the picture simultaneously faces the risk of becoming stigmatized and of depleting her symbolic virtue capital if she decides to smoke. In order to predict whether or not the girl will initiate smoking, it is necessary to know if she values the resulting increase in symbolic power capital more than she values the resulting decrease in symbolic virtue capital.

Bourdieu's (1990) economic logic of action, presented in the introduction, can be employed to delineate the mechanism that motivates some individuals to prioritize symbolic power capital and other individuals to prioritize symbolic virtue capital. According to the economic logic of action, individuals act in such manners that most effectively generate capital in relation to their personal resources and positions. Adolescents with low socioeconomic status are likely to possess the skills that are necessary to produce symbolic power capital since they have been forced to acquire a

certain degree of physical toughness and mental tenacity to cope socially and economically (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 383-385). These adolescents often face social expectations and stereotypes that augment their ability intimidate others, and they generally control small amounts of symbolic virtue capital, which puts them in a position where they have little to lose from displays of immorality. In conclusion, adolescents with low socioeconomic status have skills and social expectations that allow them to effectively generate symbolic power capital, and they have little symbolic virtue capital to lose, which makes it economically rational from their perspective to seek to maximize their symbolic power capital through the act of smoking.

Conversely, adolescents with high socioeconomic status are likely to lack the skills and social expectations that are conducive to the production of symbolic power capital through intimidation. Also, adolescents with high socioeconomic status generally possess relatively large quantities of symbolic virtue capital, since they have access to prestigious cultural resources (Bourdieu, 1984). Thus, adolescents with high socioeconomic status, who can gain little symbolic power capital but lose much symbolic virtue capital, are not motivated to smoke. This analysis above, based on Bourdieu's (1990) economic logic of action, conveys the essence of the mechanism that explains why adolescents with low socioeconomic status frequently initiate smoking despite stigmatization, while adolescents with higher socioeconomic status usually abstain from tobacco.

The logistic regression with tobacco usage as the dependent variable indicates that adolescents that do not aim for university studies are much more likely to consume tobacco. Since academic orientation is a proxy measure for socioeconomic status, the statistical result implies that adolescents with lower socioeconomic status are particularly motivated to take up the habit of consuming tobacco. This finding is in line with the

conclusions of earlier research (e.g. Green *et al.*, 2016; Maralani, 2013) and supports the plausibility of the proposed mechanism.

Conclusion

Recent research has indicated that tobacco smoking is highly stigmatizing in contemporary Western societies (Bell, McCullough, *et al.*, 2010; Evance-Polce *et al.*, 2015). Still, it has been noted that smoking is relatively frequent in lower socioeconomic groups (Bell, Salmon, *et al.*, 2010; Graham, 2012). Studies that have sought to explain the inconsistency between stigmatization and smoking have focused on the difficulties of smoking cessation (Bell, Salmon, *et al.*, 2010; Bond *et al.*, 2012) or on the varying understandings of norms in different social or geographical groups (Ahern *et al.*, 2009; Schudson & Baykurt, 2016; Stead *et al.*, 2001). However, no previous research has presented a cogent explanation of why new generations of individuals with low socioeconomic status take up the habit of smoking while being aware of smokers' stigmatized status, which appears to be a common phenomenon (Evance-Polce *et al.*, 2015; Maralani, 2013).

The current study has revealed a plausible mechanism of smoking motivation in the face of stigmatization, based on novel theoretical developments of the concept *symbolic capital* and Bourdieu's economic logic of action. The study has indicated that adolescents with low socioeconomic status are likely to be relatively motivated to smoke because they can gain much symbolic power capital and can only lose little symbolic virtue capital due to their resources and positions. In other words, it is economically rational for adolescents from lower socioeconomic groups to smoke. This conclusion explains why smoking initiation is perpetuated in lower socioeconomic groups despite their knowledge of stigmatizing consequences.

The presented mechanism of smoking motivation may help improve strategies of tobacco control in lower socioeconomic groups. Most importantly, the mechanism highlights that *strategies of tobacco control must not impute smokers with forceful or reckless identities, since such identities are likely to be attractive to adolescents with low socioeconomic status*. Forceful and reckless identities are often attractive to adolescents with low socioeconomic status because these identities allow the adolescents to gain symbolic power capital. Presumably, smoking rates among adolescents with low socioeconomic status would decrease if tobacco-control programs would associate smokers with impressions of, for example, timidity rather than forcefulness and recklessness. If impressions of timidity would supplant impressions of forcefulness and recklessness, it is reasonable to assume that smoking rates would decrease at the same time as smoking-related stigmatization would be ameliorated. The latter conclusion is based on the presumption that timid individuals generally are less norm-breaking than forceful and reckless individuals that maintain their social positions through fear. Empirical research is needed to verify the effects of associating smoking with timidity in tobacco-control campaigns. Preferably, this research should make comparisons with the effects of campaigns that associate smoking with recklessness and forcefulness.

Continued research also needs to address the fact that the impressions caused by smoking most likely depend on other personal attributes besides socioeconomic status. It may be fallacious to generalize the mechanism found in the current study, which focused on the impressions emitted by a white adolescent girl, and to conclude that this mechanism is relevant to any smoker with low socioeconomic status. Continued research should seek to determine to what extent the mechanism can be generalized to adolescents with, for example, different sexual and ethnic identities.

Also, perceived impressions are most likely influenced by observers' identities and social and cultural contexts, and it is reasonable to assume that the current study had received slightly different results if the observing individuals had not been Swedish adolescents. Thus, more research is also needed to determine the extent to which the impressions of smoking vary depending on social contexts, cultural contexts, and observers' identities.

In brief, the general aim of continued research should be to verify the suggested implications for tobacco-control strategies and to determine the generalizability of the presented smoking-motivation mechanism. If the suggested implications appear truthful and if the mechanism is consistent with empirical results from various studies, it may be possible to refine strategies of tobacco control in such a manner that smoking levels decrease and stigmatization diminishes in marginalized social groups.

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Figure 1.

[High-resolution image available in separate file.]



[INSERT BELOW FIGURE:] Fig. 1. Two identical pictures of a Swedish adolescent girl that differ only regarding the inclusion/exclusion of the act of smoking.

Table 1.

[INSERT ABOVE TABLE 1:] Table 1. The impressions and emotions that distinguish symbolic virtue capital from symbolic power capital.

	<i>Symbolic virtue capital</i>	<i>Symbolic power capital</i>
<i>Is generated through impressions of:</i>	Normativity and morality	Forcefulness and recklessness
<i>Controls actors' actions through emotions of:</i>	Guilt and shame	Fear

Table 2.

[INSERT ABOVE TABLE 2:] Table 2. The participants' attributes.

	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Academic orientation</i>		
Toward university	284	45.7
Not toward university	207	33.3
Missing	131	21.7
<i>Age</i>		
≤ 13	107	17.7
14	116	18.6
15	118	19.0
16	94	15.1
17	82	13.2
≥ 18	89	14.3
Missing	16	4.5
<i>School grade</i>		
7	113	18.2
8	117	18.8
9	126	20.3
10	110	17.7
11	85	13.7
12	67	10.8
Missing	4	0.6
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	297	47.7
Female	314	50.5
Other/missing	11	1.8
<i>Tobacco usage</i>		
Never use tobacco	494	79.4
Use tobacco	122	19.6
Missing	6	1.0

Table 3.

[INSERT ABOVE TABLE 3:] Table 3. Odds ratios for binary logistic regressions with impression measures as dependent variables. The dependent variables are placed in columns and covariates are placed in rows. A dash indicates that an interaction terms was excluded from the regression because the interaction term did not fulfil the requirement of $p < .10$.

<i>Perceived popularity</i>	<i>Kindness</i>	<i>Compassion</i>	<i>Deceitfulness</i>	<i>Conceitedness</i>	<i>Liability to bully</i>
Odds ratio (95% CI)	Odds ratio (95% CI)	Odds ratio (95% CI)	Odds ratio (95% CI)	Odds ratio (95% CI)	Odds ratio (95% CI)
2.043 (1.271-3.281)**	0.212 (0.102-0.439)***	0.358 (0.196-0.653)**	2.561 (1.442-4.547)**	3.667 (2.396-5.611)***	3.664 (2.290-5.864)***
1	1	1	1	1	1
1.418 (0.904-2.227)	1.189 (0.741-1.908)	1.094 (0.674-1.776)	1.081 (0.676-1.727)	1.001 (0.629-1.592)	0.858 (0.521-1.414)
1	1	1	1	1	1
0.660 (0.424-1.027)	0.943 (0.457-1.943)	2.011 (1.259-3.213)**	0.454 (0.288-0.717)**	0.560 (0.385-0.876)*	0.487 (0.301-0.787)**
1	1	1	1	1	1
0.709 (0.464-1.083)	2.605 (1.265-5.366)**	3.234 (1.461-7.158)**	0.340 (0.165-0.702)**	0.416 (0.270-0.641)***	0.876 (0.554-1.385)
1	1	1	1	1	1
1.403 (0.689-2.854)	1.208 (0.691-2.110)	1.410 (0.784-2.533)	0.736 (0.418-1.296)	0.784 (0.450-1.363)	0.717 (0.382-1.345)
1	1	1	1	1	1
-	-	-	-	-	-
-	3.236 (1.346-7.778)**	-	-	-	-
-	0.367 (0.152-0.888)*	0.303 (0.118-0.777)*	2.222 (0.918-5.381)	-	-
0.364 (0.138-0.959)*	-	-	-	-	-

<i>Likability</i>	
	Odds ratio (95% CI)
<i>Picture type</i>	
Smoking girl	0.207 (0.095-0.449)***
Non-smoking girl	1
<i>Academic orientation</i>	
Not university	1.325 (0.835-2.105)
University	1
<i>School grade</i>	
Upper secondary school	0.804 (0.434-1.489)
Secondary school	1
<i>Sex</i>	
Female	3.715 (2.055-6.715)***
Male	1
<i>Tobacco usage</i>	
Use tobacco	0.585 (0.293-1.166)
Never use tobacco	1
<i>Picture type by Academic orientation</i>	–
<i>Picture type by School grade</i>	2.336 (0.970-5.625)
<i>Picture type by Sex</i>	0.393 (0.170-0.906)*
<i>Picture type by Tobacco</i>	2.824 (1.058-7.539)*

[INSERT BELOW TABLE 3:] *Note.* * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 4.

[INSERT ABOVE TABLE 4:] Table 4. Odds ratios for a binary logistic regression with tobacco usage as the dependent variable. For the tobacco-usage variable, “uses tobacco” is coded 1 and “never uses tobacco” is coded 0 (reference category). Covariates are placed in rows.

<i>Tobacco usage</i>	
	Odds ratio (95% CI)
<i>Academic orientation</i>	
Not university	3.528 (2.110-5.898)***
University	1
<i>School grade</i>	
Upper secondary school	5.081 (2.932-8.807)***
Secondary school	1
<i>Sex</i>	
Female	1.843 (1.116-3.041)*
Male	1

[INSERT BELOW TABLE 4:] *Note.* * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$