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EDITORS AND NEWS DIRECTORS: Further information about this study may be obtained from Dr. Lloyd Johnston at the U-M Institute for Social Research, telephone (313) 763-5043.

ANN ARBOR---When an 18-year-old smokes cigarettes, how does it look to his peers? Cool, calm, and in control, as the cigarette advertisements would have us believe--or insecure? Rugged, tough, and independent--or simply conforming?

According to a 1982 nationwide study of some 18,000 high school seniors by University of Michigan researchers, substantially more teenagers today agree with the negative characterizations of student smokers than with the positive ones.

Only about 6 to 7 percent of the seniors surveyed agree that "when a guy (or girl) my age is smoking a cigarette, it makes him (or her) look . . . cool, calm and in control." But fully half think it makes a girl look the opposite--"insecure"--while nearly as many (43 percent) think it makes a boy look that way.

Another image which has been played up in commercials, the researchers say, is "that of the rugged male--the Marlboro man is the prototype. But when asked whether they think smoking makes a guy tend to look 'rugged, tough, and independent,' only 11 percent think it does. Substantially more seniors (24 percent) think it makes him look the opposite--'conforming,' which is definitely not considered a positive characteristic among today's teenagers.

"The big cigarette advertising theme for women over the last decade has been the one aimed at the movement toward female equality. The prototype here has been the ad with the theme 'you've come a long way, baby.' The theme is in some sense true, since among teenagers, female

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smoking rates caught up with and surpassed male smoking rates around 1977. Yet only about one in seven of today's seniors say that they think smoking actually makes a girl look 'independent and liberated.' Again, a larger proportion--one in four--believe it actually makes her look 'conforming.'

What about maturity? "Social scientists have been telling us for years that one of the reasons that young people begin to smoke is to try to look older--more adult. But when asked if they think smoking makes teenagers look 'mature and sophisticated,' only a tiny fraction (less than 9 percent) of high school seniors think that it does, for either a girl or boy. What nearly two-thirds do believe is that cigarette smoking makes a person their age look like he or she 'is trying to appear mature and sophisticated.'"

"Obviously smoking is not an in thing among today's teenagers," states Dr. Lloyd Johnston who directed the study along with two of his U-M colleagues--Drs. Jerald Bachman and Patrick O'Malley. "Young people do not think that the harmful effects of cigarette smoking have been exaggerated, more of them are concerned about health effects today than was true earlier, relatively few are smokers themselves, and nearly 60 percent flat out think that becoming a smoker reflects poor judgement."

Daily use by seniors dropped from 29 percent to 21 percent between 1977 and 1982. The U-M investigators attribute much of this decline in cigarette smoking to the rising health concerns. "Add to that the fact that they see pretense in the behavior, and you do not have a very positive image," Johnston goes on.

But if smokers suffer a loss in public image, as well as a loss in health, what about the final rationalization of most confirmed smokers--that they enjoy life more? Even on that issue, only 4 percent of high school seniors agree that "smokers know how to enjoy life more than non-smokers," while 84 percent disagree.

"We added these questions on the social connotations young people have of smoking to our ongoing study, to see if they would help us to interpret the important trends in use which were taking place," Johnston adds. "We already were monitoring health concerns, which had shifted, but many of these newer questions deal with a separate issue--that of the public image which smokers have. Frankly, we were surprised at just how many young people associate negative connotations with smoking and how few associate positive ones with it.

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"Probably the clincher is that some two-thirds say that they would personally prefer to date people who don't smoke. Given the importance to this age group of being attractive to the opposite sex, I could expect a lot of young smokers to go 'cold turkey' when they see that statistic."

Asked why he thought a number of young people still smoke, given these unfavorable opinions among most of their peers, Johnston replied: "First you have to separate why people continue smoking from why they begin smoking in the first place. Most who continue do so largely because of the powerful dependence-producing qualities of nicotine--a dependence which has proven an extremely difficult one to break.

"As to why they begin smoking in spite of all of the negatives, there are undoubtedly a number of important factors. I will just mention a couple. One, of course, is that many people think that they will not be the ones to get 'hooked'--that they'll be able to stop when they want. Another is that a lot of youngsters have parents who smoke, and the evidence is clear that parental smoking is a powerful determinant of a youngster's own smoking behavior. Parents are usually strong role models who convey much of what a child perceives to be appropriate, desirable adult behavior.

"Of course the attitudes of peers are very important too. I suspect that young people often think they are projecting quite a different image to their peers by smoking, than they actually are projecting. Thus, a youngster who starts smoking may think he is taking on some of the positive attributes promised in the ads, but in the eyes of his peers he may be losing them."

The U-M study, titled "Monitoring the Future," began in 1975 and involves an annual survey of a representative sample of 18,000 seniors in public and private high schools in the coterminous United States. A self-administered questionnaire survey is conducted in approximately 130 schools each year by the U-M's Institute for Social Research, under research grants from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and other federal agencies. "Monitoring the Future" provides much of the national information now available on trends in drug use, drinking, and smoking among American young people.

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