

Effectiveness of antismoking ads across the socioeconomic spectrum

Kate Giffin

Tobacco use is the greatest cause of preventable death in the United States, and health effects from smoking disproportionately affect lower socioeconomic status (SES) communities. Tailoring antismoking ads to the cultural norms of lower-SES communities may improve ad effectiveness. Social psychology research suggests lower-SES cultural norms are more interdependent (other-focused) while higher-SES cultural norms are more independent (self-focused). We hypothesized that other-focused antismoking ads would be more effective among lower SES individuals. To address this, we distributed two surveys on Amazon's Mechanical Turk, wherein participants rated ADS from the Centers for Disease Control antismoking ad campaign "Tips from Former Smokers". Survey 1 asked participants to categorize the ads as self-focused or other-focused. Survey 2 assessed participants' perceived effectiveness of the ads. Smoking status and socioeconomic status were also assessed. Participants classified 9 out of 28 ads as other-focused. Self-focused ads were rated as more effective than other-focused ads. A repeated measures ANCOVA revealed a significant interaction between ad type and SES. Lower SES people rated self-focused ads as more effective than other-focused ads, and higher SES people rated both ad types as almost equally effective. Overall, we found that antismoking ads classified as self-focused were perceived as more effective, and that SES moderated the effectiveness of each type of ad. Our hypothesis that lower SES individuals would rate other-focused ad more effective was not supported. More research investigating other aspects of antismoking ads to understand the relationship between ad effectiveness and SES is needed for the promotion of health equity.