

Performing Femininity: Young Women's Gendered Practice of Cigarette Smoking

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ABSTRACT *Throughout the last 20 years in Australia, young women have started smoking at a higher rate than young men, and they seem less inclined to quit. Moreover, smoking has dire health consequences that are unique to women, and smoking is now seen as a 'woman's issue'. The research reported in this article explores what cigarette smoking means to young women, to see if smoking forms part of their performative gender identity. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with a volunteer sample of 20 women smokers aged 18–24 to explore subjective interpretations of cigarette smoking and the gendered meanings associated with smoking. Grounded theory was used in the analysis of the data, and to generate a theory around the shared phenomenon of smoking. The analysis indicates that the concept of femininity is important both to the accounts that young women give about smoking and to their gender identity. For example, they choose cigarettes branded as feminine, and hold and ash their cigarettes in 'gender-appropriate' ways. Drawing upon the notion of gender performance, I argue that smoking is a gender act that can be internalised and which, when repeatedly performed by women in gender-appropriate ways, constructs a 'feminine' gender identity.*

KEYWORDS: Cigarettes, smoking, femininity, gender identity, performativity, young women

Introduction

The negative and potentially fatal health implications of cigarette smoking for women are now well established (Aghi *et al.*, 2001, p. 40; Ernster, 2001, p. 1; McDermott *et al.*, 2002, p. 56; Payne, 2001, p. 1067; Coates & Armstrong, 1999, p. 36; Boyd *et al.*, 2000, p. 190), and smoking is firmly positioned as an important gender and health issue (Tracey *et al.*, 2003, p. 3; MacKay, 2001, p. vi; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001; Morabia *et al.*, 2002, p. 73). Equally, it is clear that a range of interpersonal and psychosocial factors impact a young woman's decision to start and to continue smoking, including peer pressure, family influence, low self-esteem, using smoking as a coping mechanism, image construction (Santi *et al.*, 1991, p. 893; Rienzi *et al.*, 1996, p. 340), and a woman's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and values (Amos, 1992, p. 19; Lynch & Bonnie, 1994, p. 54). More recently, however, it has been suggested that cigarettes can be used by young women as a fashionable prop in the external portrayal of gender identity (Wearing & Wearing, 2000).

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It has been argued that the representation of our selves relies to a large extent on the 'symbols associated with the goods we purchase, and especially those that are in fashion at a particular time' (Wearing & Wearing, 2000, p. 45). Fashion is a major source of personal identification, where a sense of self identity is often constructed from external appearances and styles (Finkelstein, 1991). Individuals have learned to value the image of how they look and how they are styled, and to understand that constructing an external appearance is a way to create a degree of social acceptance. Our self identity, or our sense of self, has, according to Finkelstein (1991, p. 9), become a product that can be purchased and 'fashioned' (shaped, styled and reshaped) from 'a market place of ideas and images' produced by the 'culture industries'.

Cigarette promoters have used the promotion of cigarettes as a fashion accessory as one of the key strategies to encourage young women to smoke (Gilbert, 2003). As a result, young women can use smoking as a commodified and glamorous fashion accessory, allowing smoking to be seen as a fashionable expression of individuality, a way to enhance an individual's outward appearance, and as a way to gain status and peer group approval (Wearing & Wearing, 2000, p. 50). When seen as fashionable products, cigarettes offer individuals a sense of control over their self and their circumstances, by allowing them to create who they want to be when they want to be it (Finkelstein, 1991, p. 147; Nichter *et al.*, 1997, p. 290; Banwell & Young, 1993, p. 383).

Conceptualising cigarettes as a fashion accessory that can be used to portray self identity is important as it recognises the potential significance of smoking to a young woman's construction and presentation of gender identity. However, much of the research surrounding smoking and gender identity does not adequately theorise the concept of gender. I will extend existing research in this area by using Judith Butler's (1990, 1993, 1999a) work on gender performativity. By drawing upon the interview responses of young women smokers, I will show that the concept of 'femininity' is important both to the accounts they give about smoking and to their gender identity. I will discuss young women's choice to smoke cigarettes that are branded as 'feminine', and then move on to discuss how they hold and ash their cigarettes to show that smoking is a gender act that can be internalised and which, when repeatedly performed by young women in gender-appropriate ways, constructs a 'feminine' gender identity.

Methods

Semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews with 20 Australian women smokers aged 18–24 were conducted to explore the subjective interpretations of cigarette smoking and of the images associated with cigarettes. The semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that some predetermined questions were asked, but the interview was mostly open-ended and exploratory, unstructured questions (see Rice & Ezzy, 1999, p. 53). Some of the themes covered in each interview were: 'first experiences with smoking'; 'current experiences with smoking'; 'the meanings of cigarettes and smoking'; 'images associated with cigarette smoking'; 'smoking styles'; and 'social connections and friendships'.

The 20 women participating in this research were purposively selected on the basis that they were aged between 18 and 24, and that they smoked cigarettes on a regular daily basis. Recruitment occurred in two ways: *volunteer sampling*; and *snowball sampling*. All of the young women lived in Sydney, Newcastle or the Hunter Valley. Posters were placed on community notice boards at shopping centres in the greater Sydney area,

Newcastle, and in the Hunter Valley. Posters were also placed in a number of central Sydney and Hunter Valley universities, as well as at sporting clubs, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges and libraries. The Sydney area was chosen because of proximity to potential participants, and the Newcastle and Hunter Valley areas were selected to provide a more geographically heterogeneous sample. All the young women, except one, who was Malaysian, were Anglo-Australian.

The research was approved by the appropriate University Research Ethics Committee, and the young women were given an information form, and asked to sign a consent form, acknowledging their voluntary participation. The interviews were one-off, usually lasted for between one and a half hours and two hours, and took place from May to December 2002. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The excerpts that appear in this paper have been edited only to the extent that a few irrelevant sentences and words have been replaced with ellipses, and excessive uses of colloquialisms, such as 'like' and 'um' have been removed. Ellipses (...) are used to indicate the removal of irrelevant sentences. Square brackets indicate certain undercurrents in the interview, such as [pause] or [laughter]. When sentences trail off without further elaboration, is used as an indicator.

As the interview process progressed and the research was refined, Strauss and Corbin's (1990, p. 176) notion of 'theoretical sampling' was employed, which is, as they define, '... sampling on the basis of concepts that have proven theoretical relevance to the evolving theory'. Grounded theory was used to generate a theory around the context of the shared phenomenon of cigarette smoking. Each interview transcript was manually coded, where themes and propositions were developed, and then refined. The analysis began by reducing the interview data into meaningful chunks and 'bracketing' passages of the transcripts (Seidman, 1991, p. 89). By bracketing the data into chunks, concepts and categories were then developed and coded. Sampling occurred until 'theoretical saturation' was believed to have been reached, and there was no new or relevant data emerging (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 188).

The interview responses that appear throughout this paper have been selected according to those young women who describe, in most detail, the themes relevant to this paper. Table 1 identifies some of the demographic factors relating to the young women participating in the research. The table also outlines various factors associated with the young women's current smoking status. However, Table 1 is not intended to provide an exhaustive description of each of the young women, or to classify them into immutable categories. Instead, it provides some background to the young women's current, everyday life situations and smoking status.

Cigarette Brands: Packaging 'Femininity'

In the light of shifting public attitudes towards smoking, legislation has been gradually introduced which has made the direct advertising of cigarettes, both abroad and in Australia, unlawful. In Australia, between 1973 and 1976, direct advertisements for cigarettes were phased out on both radio and television (Loken & Howard-Pitney, 1988, p. 378); in 1993 legislation banned existing forms of advertising in print media; in 1996 outdoor media advertising was banned (Chapman & Wakefield, 2001, p. 283; Bardsley & Olekalns, 1999); and in 1999 point of sale advertising was banned (Donovan *et al.*, 2002, p. 192). These bans meant that individuals no longer directly encountered images that

Table 1. Demographics smoking status of the twenty women smokers aged 18–24

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age (years)</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Suburb in which participant lives (NSW)</i>	<i>Number of cigarettes smoked per day</i>	<i>Number of years as a regular smoker</i>	<i>Cigarette brand smoked</i>
Loretta	21	Full-time university student/ casual retail assistant	Western Suburbs of Sydney	12	4	Winfield Gold
Jessica	19	Full-time university student	Upper-North Shore of Sydney	5	4	Winfield Gold
Donna	22	Full-time university student/ part-time waitress	Inner-Western suburbs of Sydney	14	5	Dunhill Gold
Rebecca	23	Full-time supervisor of white- collar workers in the finance industry	Lower-North Shore of Sydney	8	6	Peter Jackson Super Mild
Sam	22	Full-time clerical worker	Inner-Western suburbs of Sydney	5	7	Winfield Gold
Jane	22	Temporary clerical worker	Sydney city	12	6	Dunhill Blue
Penny	24	Full-time supervisor of service workers	Upper-Northern suburbs of Sydney	15	8	Winfield Blue
Prue	19	Full-time university student	Newcastle city	6	2	Winfield Gold
Michele	22	Full-time university student/ part-time retail assistant	Newcastle city	10	5	Peter Jackson Mild
Sarah	22	Full-time clerical worker	Hunter Valley region	25	1	Peter Jackson Super Mild
Sue	20	Full-time clerical worker	Outer-Western suburbs of Sydney	12	3	Holiday
Sally	22	Full-time clerical worker	Outer-Western suburbs of Sydney	1	9	Marlboro Lights
Helen	22	Full-time university student	Inner-Western suburbs of Sydney	12	1.5	Marlboro Lights
Nicki	23	Full-time university student/ part-time customer services worker	North-West suburbs of Sydney	5	9	Dunhill Blue
Pat	19	Unemployed	Newcastle city	10	2	Peter Jackson Super Mild

Brandy	24	Part-time worker in a professional occupation	Newcastle city	4	8	Benson and Hedges
Molly	24	Full-time university student	Newcastle city	10	8	Matinee
Jackie	22	Full-time clerical worker	Western suburbs of Sydney	6	3	Dunhill Gold
Ashley	18	Full-time university student/ part-time retail assistant	North-Western suburbs of Sydney	7	2	Marlboro Lights
Tess	23	Full-time university student/ part-time worker in a professional occupation	Western suburbs of Sydney	11	7	Winfield Gold

promoted smoking as a desirable habit, nor were they subject to explicit messages encouraging them to smoke.

Containing and controlling the pro-smoking discourse, however, has proved to be no simple task, and despite the advertising bans, smoking continues to be promoted today – though now in more covert/indirect and subtle ways (see Stockwell & Glantz, 1997, p. 57; Kilbourne, 1999, p. 185). In Australia, cigarette promotion now occurs through a number of avenues including: ‘leakage’ from small circulation magazines imported from overseas; international broadcasts of sponsored sporting events (Chapman & Wakefield, 2001, p. 283); portrayals of smoking in movies, on television, in music lyrics and videos; through video games; and in the editorial sections of fashion magazines (Wakefield *et al.*, 2003, p. 89). In addition, and in recent times, the cigarette pack has been used as the primary vehicle for cigarette promotion in Australia (Wakefield & Letcher, 2002, p. 154).

It has been suggested that, for most consumer products, packaging has become an important marketing strategy because it attracts attention to the product and helps to make the sale (Wakefield *et al.*, 2002, p. i73; Ewen, 1990). The packaging of cigarettes is no exception, and is an important marketing technique used to make cigarettes appealing to women. However, what distinguishes cigarette packaging from most other packaged products is that rather than discarding the packaging after opening, smokers generally keep their pack close to them for easy accessibility. Smokers usually carry their packs with them, take them out everyday to complete the smoking ritual, and even leave them on public display.

The general ‘social visibility’ of the cigarette pack means that cigarettes have come to be known as ‘badge products’, where the smoker is associated with the brand image and given the identity and personality of the brand image (Wakefield *et al.*, 2002, p. i74). For example, cigarettes designed specifically for women are often packaged in slim, long packs, often with light colours to make the cigarettes appear ‘feminine’ (see Greaves, 1996, p. 54). The idea is that if women smoke cigarettes packaged in a ‘feminine’ way, then they will be recognised by others, or badged as ‘feminine’. The pack itself, then, becomes an advertisement, communicating as much about the chosen brand of cigarettes as it does about the person who smokes them (Wakefield *et al.*, 2002, p. i79; Carter, 2003, p. iii79; Carpenter *et al.*, 2005, p. 842).

In the interview with Loretta, she noted the appeal of the white colouring of certain cigarettes. Loretta said that she used to smoke ‘jazzy’ cigarettes, such as ‘Vogue’ and ‘Cartier’, for the ‘look’ and the ‘image’ of designer brand cigarettes, though the increased expense associated with studying means that she now smokes Winfield Gold. For her, designer cigarettes, such as ‘Vogue’, are appealing because they are ‘very thin and white’, ‘they’re like a third of a normal cigarette, and only women smoke them because they’re longer, and they’re all white, and they’re thinner and it would just look ridiculous for a male to smoke them, because it looks very feminine’. When I asked her why she thought Vogue cigarettes appeal to women, she suggested that it was because, ‘we associate a man as masculine, rugged, and not very prissy and not conforming to that sort of image’.

In fact, for most of the young women, cigarette brand choice is influenced by the colour of the cigarette packet, as well as by the colour of the cigarette. Packets that are either gold or white or a combination of white and gold, including Winfield Gold, Marlboro Lights and Benson and Hedges, were reported as appealing. Jessica, for example, suggested that it was the gold packaging of Winfield cigarettes that encouraged her to switch from Winfield Blue to Gold. When I asked her why she felt that the ‘gold’ colouring was

appealing, she said: 'maybe it's because it's like fashion, like, a whole women's thing, magazines, fashion things. I think it fits into that glove of stereotypes'. Others felt that it was a combination of the white and gold colours that made the Marlboro Lights cigarette appealing, because as Rebecca pointed out: they are 'kind of, in more like, feminine type packaging', and that the cigarettes males tend to smoke, 'like Peter Stuyvesant' are 'stronger'.

If we look at Helen's response below, we are able to explore some of the reasons why cigarettes, that are entirely white (including the filter), may be appealing to young women. As Helen explains, the whiteness of the Marlboro Lights cigarette is, for her, associated with cleanliness and is seen to be not as 'dirty' as a traditionally coloured cigarette (with a yellow filter). Historically, print media cigarette advertisements have linked cigarettes that are 'clean' and 'mild' (and which, in the 1930s and 1940s were, on this basis, healthier), with femininity in the context of smoking, and as suitable to the 'more delicate' female palate (Gilbert, 2003). It is interesting that this historical construction of women's smoking practices, where a woman is thought to require a 'healthier cigarette', and the association of these cigarettes with colour and packaging, continues to be reflected in the responses of the young women today – an issue to which I shall return later in the paper. In her response, Helen suggests that the whiteness of the cigarette allows her to feel as though she is smoking a cigarette that will not be as deleterious to her health as a 'traditional Winnie Blue'.

Helen: I find a lot of people smoke, like the Marlboro Lights, um, a lot of girls I mean, or the Dunhill Lights. I find more guys smoke the Winfield brand, I'm not sure why that is, maybe Marlboro's have more that girl image. I'm not exactly sure why, (...) oh maybe, they're white and for some reason the colour, 'cause you know, usually you have the brownish end. (...) I like the fact that they're white, I don't really know, though.

I: So why the white?

Helen: Oh, maybe they're a little bit more of a classy cigarette. Maybe for some reason I associate white with being not as dirty, or maybe it doesn't smell as much, like, just the association with the white, like, maybe it's cleaner, white also for me, maybe, I think, 'cause it's not doing me as much harm as maybe the traditional Winnie Blue, you know, or those really strong cigarettes.

From her response, we can see that Helen is aware of the potential ill-health effects of smoking, but that her choice of cigarette brand, on the basis of colour, allows her to underplay the ill-health effects of smoking, and use the perceived aesthetics of the white cigarette to justify the suitability of that cigarette for women. This point raised by Helen has been addressed by other researchers who have suggested that product designs (especially those which use 'light' colouring) tend to make cigarettes seem more palatable, and that often pack design can affect the perception of the cigarette strength and taste (Wakefield *et al.*, 2002, p. i78; Wayne & Connolly, 2002, p. i41; Carpenter *et al.*, 2005, p. 846). For example, Banwell and Young (1993, p. 382) found that cigarettes and cigarette packets with a white appearance were seen by young women as 'clean' or were considered to be 'sterile sticks'. It appears that cigarettes that are marketed as 'light' and which are packaged in 'light' colours, encourage young women to smoke because they are misled into thinking they are smoking a safer product (Richmond, 2003, p. 554; Wakefield

et al., 2002, p. i80), and that a safer product is more feminine as it suits the needs of a woman's palate. This, of course, is despite the fact that there is no evidence to suggest that these cigarette types deliver less tar when smoked (Wakefield *et al.*, 2003, p. 80).

In fact, 'light' and 'mild' cigarettes have become essential to Australian brands, with both lightness and mildness expressed not simply through variant names, but through pack colours (Carter, 2003, p. iii82). Equally, 'low tar per milligram' cigarettes have been a priority for Australia since the mid-1970s because they attract 'health conscious smokers' (Carter, 2003, p. iii81).

I will now turn to look more specifically at the concept of gender performance, and at how, in addition to the choice of the feminine cigarette, these young women project and (re)construct gendered smoking styles. That is to say, although the young women identify that they smoke feminine cigarette brands, are these cigarettes also smoked in gender specific and feminine ways?

Gendered Smoking Styles

Cigarette advertising and promotion (including images in magazines, on television and in movies) has constructed the idea of gender specific 'smoking styles', where activities such as smoking certain cigarette brands, and holding and ashing cigarettes in certain ways, allow the cigarette to be used as a prop in the external performance of femininity (Greaves, 1996, p. 530; Tinkler, 2001). For women, smoking styles, and the image they are seen to present, derive strongly from the construction of socially acceptable codes of appropriate feminine conduct, and the divisions between what are considered acceptable masculine and feminine smoking styles. If we look at this issue in relation to some of the responses of the young women in my research, we can see that the act of smoking a cigarette is regarded as having clear gender-specific connotations, where certain ways of smoking allow an image of femininity to be projected, whilst others are indicative of masculinity.

When asked how men and women hold and ash their cigarettes, most of the young women suggested that men tend to hold their cigarettes the way one would hold a 'joint', explaining that when inhaling from a cigarette, men often wrap their thumb and index finger around the very tip of the cigarette, and between inhales, rest their cigarettes 'down by their side' in a 'hidden' position. Women, on the other hand, were said to hold their cigarettes between their index and the middle finger, preferring to make their act of smoking 'visible' and 'obvious' in a way that 'showed off' their smoking. For the most part, the young women felt that these gender styles of smoking were 'the masculine' and 'the feminine' way of smoking, with general agreement that the feminine way of smoking has to do with the perceived image that smoking can offer a woman. In fact, in my interview with Helen, she pointed out that 'some girls like to be seen in public smoking, and I don't really see that with guys as much' and 'girls are more, you know with girls, it's more this deliberate thing that when they go out and they get all dressed up that cigarettes are part of that'.

All of the young women were adamant that it would be uncomfortable and undesirable to breach the gender specific smoking styles by 'smoking like a man'. Sam for instance, who described herself as 'not a very girly, girly type of person', suggested that she would not hold or smoke cigarettes in a 'masculine way' because she 'wouldn't want to be perceived as being butch, or manly, or anything like that, in any way'. For her, the more masculine way of smoking is 'just a little bit butchy', and it is this 'butchiness', and the

masculinity associated with it, that prevents Sam from breaching the gender specific and feminine style of smoking. The same could be said of Prue and Sarah, who explained that they would not hold and ash their cigarette the way they have seen men smoke, because as Prue suggests, 'I just don't want to look real rough', or because, according to Sarah, 'it looks filthy', 'too masculine and atrocious'. That the young women were unanimous in their views about smoking and correct gender conduct could, perhaps, be related to the homogeneity of sexual identities in this sample. All of the young women identified as heterosexual – being both subjects and objects constituted within, and governed by, social power relations and the discursive construction/production of 'appropriate' sexuality. Let us look at the response of Loretta below to explore this issue in more detail.

According to Loretta, men and women *should* hold their cigarettes in different ways so as to maintain the division between appropriate masculine and appropriate feminine conduct. Unlike Sam, who did not see herself as 'very girly', Loretta said that she has 'always been very feminine and very girly'. In fact, she explained to me that she did not want 'to get mixed up with the androgynous', because she once cut her hair 'really short' and was 'really upset' when guys would say, 'oh that chick that (*sic*) looked like a bloke', and she felt it was 'really nasty'. As such, for Loretta, a woman's style of smoking should be a display of her femininity, whereas she feels that for men, smoking is an act which is far more casual, and less of a display.

I: Can you tell me how men and women hold their cigarettes?

Loretta: I'm very passionate about this. I hate girls who hold their cigarettes like men, like that (she gives a brief make believe demonstration, where she puts her index finger and thumb together and hangs her hand down by her side).

I: How is it?

Loretta: I'll show you, it's horrible. It's kind of like a joint, and they hold it like that (she gives a more detailed demonstration using a pen as a substitute for a cigarette), and then they go like this (drops her hand down by her side to indicate that the cigarette is casually held by men). I can't even do it, it's horrible, and it's, like, you can't pull it off unless you've got, like, the bad boy image.

I: Okay.

Loretta: You know [laugh], most girls hold it like this (she demonstrates again with the pen to show me how women typically hold cigarettes between their index and middle finger, with the thumb tucked under the ring finger and the entire hand near her face).

I: And what about ashing the cigarette?

Loretta: I prefer girls to ash like this (she lightly touches the end of the cigarette with her index finger and taps downwards on the cigarette to ash).

I: Oh to touch down?

Loretta: I hate girls who ash like that (demonstrates the motion of flicking the end with the thumb), and just flick it everywhere.

With many of the young women indicating that men and women hold their cigarettes differently, and that as 'women' they are reluctant to hold their cigarette 'like a man', the issue of 'gender-appropriate' conduct is raised. Though very little research has been conducted on this issue specifically in relation to the act of smoking, the findings from a large longitudinal qualitative study conducted by Nielsen *et al.*, (2000) are instructive

here. Over 15 years, Nielsen *et al.*, (2000) collected 658 students' narratives of their own and others' reactions to their behaviour when they violated gender norms, to show that when traditional gender boundaries are crossed, routinely unquestioned 'heteronormative' expectations and proscriptions that exist as 'background context' in our society, come to the fore. For example, women who smoked traditionally masculine forms of tobacco, such as cigars, pipes and chewed tobacco, were considered unattractive according to heterosexual norms. In 1986, a woman participating in the research reported that, after she smoked a pipe in front of her husband's seminar group, one on-looker commented 'it's a good thing she's married because she probably wouldn't get any dates'. Similarly, one of two women who chewed tobacco and smoked cigars in 'a university town setting' in 1988, reported that she overheard an on-looker say 'I would never date someone that (*sic*) smokes cigars' (Nielsen *et al.*, 2000, p. 291). These examples point to the importance of women being attractive in order to maintain socially recognised relationships with men. If smoking in a masculine way is considered to have negative connotations for women's projection of a feminine image, and if this is an image that is desired to be projected by young women, the incentive to smoke in a feminine way may be considered by these young women smokers to be an important marker of their gender identity and sexuality.

The issues that remain are: why the young women do not hold and smoke their cigarettes in a 'masculine' way; and how their gendered smoking styles can be explained. To address these issues, we need to explore how smoking forms part of the young women's gender identity and the consequences that may ensue if the young women breach gender norms by smoking like a man. By using Judith Butler's work on performativity, my aim is to explain how smoking has become a gender act that women internalise in the performance of gender norms.

Smoking as Gender Performance

Judith Butler's (1990, 1993, 1999a, p. 235) notion of performativity starts from the premise that an account of gender must not merely assume that it is the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex. Instead, 'the regulatory norms of "sex"' work in a performative fashion to constitute the 'materiality of bodies', where these norms 'materialise the body's sex into sexual dichotomies' in order to serve the 'heterosexual imperative' (Butler, 1993, p. 2). For Butler, gender has no 'natural' existence or 'ontological status', apart from performative acts, and it is in the repeated performance of these acts, and therefore of one's gender, that individuals are rendered human. This is because gender 'qualifies' bodies as human bodies, or as Butler says, 'if you do not fit gender, you do not fit human' (1990, p. 110, 1999b, p. 417).

According to Butler, performativity is not a singular deliberate act. Rather, it is the 'reiterative practice by which discourse produces the effects it names' (Butler, 1993, p. 2, 1999a, p. 236). The idea is that the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated, and this repetition is based on a set of meanings already socially established, where to repeat them is to 'ritualistically legitimate' them. Via the process of repetition, what we end up having is the 'effect of gender', which is produced through the stylisation of the body. Here, we can see that Butler's notion of performativity, or the effect of gender, is akin to Foucault's idea of the 'effects of truth', where every society produces its own truths which have a normalising effect and a regulatory function. In the case of gender performance, it is through the performance and concomitant legitimisation of certain acts

that the effect of gender is produced, where specific bodily gestures, movements and styles (for example, hair style, the use of cosmetics, bodily posture, how one sits, stands, speaks and the accessories they wear), work to constitute the 'illusion' of an 'abiding gendered self' (Butler, 1999b, p. 421). The acts and gestures that create the 'illusion of an interior gender core', according to Butler, mean that the illusion is 'discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the compulsory framework of reproductive heterosexuality' (1990, p. 136, 1999b, p. 417).

The 'inner truth' of gender then, is a fabrication that is inscribed on the surface of bodies and produced as "'truth effects" of a discourse of primary and stable identity' (Butler, 1999b, p. 417). That is to say, the performance of these acts creates the appearance of an inner substance, where this inner substance is a constructed identity and a 'performative accomplishment', and where the 'social audience' and 'actors' come to believe in, and perform the mode of belief (Butler, 1990, p. 141). The issue that underpins this performance is that individuals, when in the act of gender performance, are not internalising gender norms. Instead, it is these 'acts' that are internalised and which have come to denote what we know as gender norms. Or, as Simons (1996, p. 198) suggests, the point is not that an individual puts on make-up each day to express her femininity, rather, by the putting on of the make-up, she is performing one of the many acts she must repeat to be feminine.

If gender is nothing other than the performative repetition of socially accepted and legitimated acts, we can break gender down into those acts and look at how they contribute to the feminisation and genderisation of women. For example, styling or cutting one's hair in a certain way, applying cosmetics, dressing in accordance with certain gender fashions, or sitting with one's legs crossed, are all socially legitimated as feminine acts, which, when internalised and then repeatedly performed, construct and constitute what we know as the feminine gender.

By using Butler's work, we can look at how cigarettes have been, both historically and in contemporary society, directly and indirectly advertised specifically to women, by associating them with socially legitimated feminine ideals. As I have argued elsewhere, cigarette advertising is part of a broader pro-smoking discourse that has feminised smoking and produced gender appropriate smoking styles that privilege heterosexuality as the natural way to be, and define the differences between men and women in specific ways (Gilbert, 2003). Before moving on to discuss why many of the young women participating in this research perceive that there are gender specific ways of smoking cigarettes, and that there are 'feminine' cigarette brands, when they are of an age that has had limited, if any, exposure to direct cigarette advertising, I will briefly outline how cigarette ads and promotion have worked to feminise cigarette smoking, by normalising smoking as part of the feminine ideal. I am guided by Llobera's (1998, p. 73) assertion that one of the main justifications for exploring the historical underpinnings of a phenomenon is that 'the past is in the present'. Consequently, this paper is premised on the notion that contemporary discourses on smoking and the understandings some young women in contemporary society have of smoking, have been shaped by discourses that have their origins in the recent past.

In the 1930s, when tobacco companies first began to target their advertising at the emerging group of Australian women consuming tobacco, smoking was associated with the 'modern woman' and with a challenge to notions of respectability and to women's 'proper' role (Elkind, 1986, p. 223; Howe, 1984, p. 4). With the increased acceptability of women's smoking, cigarette promoters very strategically portrayed the woman smoker in a way

which would both encourage women to smoke and reflect a 'socially acceptable' way of doing so. For example, tobacco companies promoted cigarettes as 'torches of freedom', positioning smoking not only as respectable for women, but also as sociable, fashionable, stylish and feminine (Amos & Haglund, 2000, pp. 3–4). These advertisements linked cigarettes with glamour and beauty, and feminised smoking by marketing certain types of cigarettes as specifically suitable for the 'more delicate' physiology of women. 'Mild' cigarettes were recommended to women as opposed to traditional non-mild (and therefore masculine) cigarettes, and were branded for women's use on the basis that they are soothing to women's nerves and kind to their throat. In addition, 'filter tip' cigarettes were marketed as more suitable to the needs of a woman because they used a 'finer', more 'fragrant', and more 'palatable' blend of tobacco, which was thought to be more suitable for 'sensitive throats' and the assumed softer, more delicate physiology of women. These advertisements often included text that defined the cigarette, or its packaging, as feminine in its form. In an advertisement for 'Garrick Filter Tip' cigarettes, it is asserted that 'Smart women everywhere are turning to "Garrick" Filter Tip. They like the smart new tin in its handsome green and gold ...' (*The Australian Women's Weekly*, 1 August 1936, p. 11), and the claim was made for 'Craven A' that it was 'made especially to prevent sore throats' (*The Australian Women's Weekly*, 23 January 1943, p. 31).¹

Advertisements of the 1950s offered a significant change in focus, due in large part to an increased prosperity in Australia, which facilitated a new consumer revolution (Tyrell, 1999, p. 164). With expanding suburbs, lower unemployment, and many women re-entering the workforce after having children, cigarette advertising after the Second World War captured the social changes by playing upon the general feeling of excitement and growth (Tyrell, 1999, p. 145). These ads were no longer focused on branding the cigarette as exclusively feminine, but on contextualising the cigarette as something to be shared by women and men. Although these ads use images of men and women pictured smoking together (implying both genders smoke equally), smoking by men and women was portrayed as a practice delineated along the lines of appropriate gender conduct. If women are pictured in advertisements holding a cigarette, the etiquette of women's smoking means that they must do so gracefully and beguilingly (Walker, 1984, p. 66). For example, in many of the ads that depict women supposedly smoking in the company of men and with social approval, women rarely pose holding the cigarette to their lips. Instead, they pose holding a cigarette delicately between their fingers, looking on and watching men smoke (Gilbert, 2003).

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the cigarette was heavily promoted as a vital feminine accessory, aimed to enhance special social occasions shared between heterosexual couples. These ads were printed in a time during which women's smoking had become considerably more acceptable, and the ads (re)created a 'culture of smoking' in which men and women were shown using cigarettes as part of the pattern of courtship, romance and sex (Tyrell, 1999, pp. 157–158). In these ads, smoking by women was also contextualised in terms of gender appropriate conduct within the heterosexual relationship. For example, some ads set up the idea that it was most appropriate for women to smoke 'fine filter' or 'delicate' cigarettes which came in a 'fashion pack', or that women should be discerning and select their brand of 'cigarettes as carefully as you choose your perfumes' (*The Australian Women's Weekly*, 18 May 1966, p. 6) – implying that cigarettes are a neat 'accessory' to complement women's sense of fashion and style. However, cigarettes were now marketed to women as 'necessary' to the successful social and intimate interaction

of romantic heterosexual couples. Many of these themes continued throughout the 1970s, though in the late 1970s and 1980s, women's smoking became associated with high-style living, healthy outdoor activities, and economic, social and professional success (Davis, 1987, p. 727). Given that legislation was introduced in the early 1990s that banned the advertising of cigarettes in the Australian print media, there is little scope for research on the imagery contained within cigarette advertisements after the 1980s, beyond that which exists abroad.

Despite the changes in the dominant discourses of cigarette advertisements over the course of the twentieth century, in most cases, cigarette ads recreate and perpetuate asymmetrical gender conduct (Tinkler, 2001). As I have suggested, the images of women reinforce the idea that men's and women's smoking should be performed on different terms, and at all times according to socially constructed notions of gender-appropriate conduct (Gilbert, 2003). Consequently, cigarette promotion, as part of a broader pro-smoking discourse, has fashioned cigarettes to the needs of the 'modern woman' by re-packaging and re-branding the cigarette with feminine connotations, and this has constructed cigarette smoking as a legitimate way for women to perform their 'appropriate' gender identity in the light of socially constructed characteristics of what it means to be a woman. As far as the images of women in cigarette ads are concerned, women's smoking is simultaneously celebrated as modern, but in a way that eschews manliness and any challenge to conventional heterosexual and gender relations. There is, therefore, a thin line which is drawn between acceptable and unacceptable smoking in relation to the perceived threat that women's smoking poses to masculinity and gender relations more broadly. That is to say, women's smoking is represented in such a way that renders it unable to usurp the privileges of masculinity. It is rare to see cigarette ads in which women are pictured as choosing a career over romance, or being like a 'man', simply because these are not considered to be as attractive, or acceptable for women (Lazar, 2002, p. 114).

Although the ads clearly show some flexibility of gender norms which are acceptable and which were consistent with modernity, the line is drawn at conduct that cannot be accommodated within the prevailing gender hierarchy (see Tinkler, 2001, p. 120). If we cast our minds back to the responses of 20 Australian young women smokers participating in this study, we can see that the gender specific and socially accepted norms of 'appropriate' feminine conduct used by the pro-smoking discourse to give the cigarette symbolic gendered meanings, have shaped the meanings that these young women have of cigarettes and of smoking.

Conclusion

Today, young women smokers are still encouraged to conform to dominant norms of femininity through the media's indirect promotion of smoking. The greater restrictions on public tobacco promotion have arguably made movies and television a key way that young women learn about the stylistic elements and social context of smoking (Sargent *et al.*, 2002, pp. 137–138; Kilbourne, 1999, p. 185). Hazan *et al.* (1994, p. 999) for instance, conducted a study in which two feature-length films for each year from 1960 through to 1990 were randomly selected from the 20 top money-making films of each year. A total of 62 films were selected which differed in their rating classification.² After the films were analysed for the presence of 'tobacco events',³ the study concluded that there was no significant decline over time of tobacco use in movies. In fact, it was found that over time,

more films showed women smoking and fewer tobacco events involved men, and that the number of films which showed young people (aged 18–29) smoking, more than doubled.

Although obtaining direct ‘proof’ that tobacco advertisements entice individuals to smoke is highly problematic, if not impossible (see Willemsen & de Zwart, 1999, p. 588), I would submit that we cannot underestimate the potential impact of contemporary forms of indirect cigarette promotion on the meanings young women attach to smoking. I would also submit that these meanings cannot be dissociated from the meanings cigarette promoters have historically associated with smoking, which have normalised smoking as part of the feminine ideal and provided a key impetus for young women to take up smoking. The contemporary appropriation of the historically constructed meaning of cigarettes as glamorous, through television shows, movies and magazines, means that smoking continues to be understood as a glamorous habit in which young women can engage in order to achieve a ‘desirable’ feminine image. Take the popular television show ‘Sex and the City’, where the star of the show, Carrie, a woman meticulous about her personal fashion style and who is obsessed about wearing the latest designer accessories, smokes Marlboro cigarettes when life, or her romantic relationships with men, get too difficult for her to deal with. She represents an image of a young woman who seemingly ‘has it all’ and, as such, may be a figure to whom other young women aspire. For some young women, the desirable qualities attributed to Carrie (her attractiveness, her social and professional success and her good fashion sense), may seem achievable, if they too smoke Marlboro cigarettes. Clearly, part of what it is to have an image like Carrie’s is to have the props and accessories that make up that image.

Other indirect forms of cigarette promotion have also become established means of targeting young women, including: point of sale advertising (Donovan *et al.*, 2002, p. 191); promotion of cigarettes at social and fashion events (Harper, 2001, p. 196); and ‘Wavesnet’ – an aggressive marketing strategy set up by Phillip Morris in conjunction with an advertising agency to distribute a magazine called ‘Waves’. Aimed at young women, this magazine contained references to smoking and some subtle imagery, with consumers receiving gifts such as a cosmetic pouch, cosmetic mirror, and lip liner with tobacco purchases (Harper, 2001, p. 196).

As I have suggested, cigarette ads are one of many competing discourses that define differences between men and women, and which produce individuals with expectations about men and women’s behaviour (in the context of smoking). Extending this idea, smoking cigarettes can be seen as one of the many gendered acts that are internalised, and which, when repeatedly performed by women in gender appropriate ways, goes to make up and fabricate gender identity.⁴ That is, the cigarette represents an easy way for young women to adopt a practice that has been socially constructed as having ‘legitimate’ feminine connotations. If the act of smoking is internalised in a manner consistent with these constructions, smoking becomes one of many acts that assists women in the performance of their appropriate gender. The repeated performance of the feminine way cigarettes are held, smoked and ‘ashed’, means that cigarette smoking can work with other gendered acts to constitute the illusion of an ‘abiding gendered self’, and produce the effect of a gender identity.

On the basis of the findings and in the light of discussions of gender performance, since smoking has become so firmly aligned with gender and gender appropriate behaviour, any attempt to educate and change young women’s smoking conduct should recognise that smoking is often one way to perform an appropriate gender identity.

Perhaps educating young women about the health risks of smoking is insufficient, and health educators need to be aware that smoking can be a means by which to construct and perform their gender identity.

Notes

- ¹ Incidentally, at this time, Craven A cigarettes were awarded the certificate of the Institute of Hygiene for quality and purity (Hilton, 2000, p. 99).
- ² Twenty six percent of the films were unrated because films released before 1968 were unrated, 33% were G rated (films classified as suitable for general audiences of all ages), 52% were rated PG or PG13 (parental guidance suggested for audiences under the age of 13) and 15% were rated R (films classified as restricted, with audiences under the age of 17 requiring an accompanying parent or legal guardian). There were no X-rated films included.
- ³ 'Tobacco events' included: implied or actual consumption of tobacco; tobacco paraphernalia (such as ashtrays and matches); talking about tobacco; no-smoking signs; and tobacco product logos.
- ⁴ My argument is not that non-smoking women are any less feminine because they do not smoke. Rather, my point is that when gender is broken down into acts, and smoking is performed in a socially legitimated feminine way, it can be seen as one of myriad acts that go to make up gender.

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