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Gender Identity, Ethnic Identity, and Smoking among First Nations Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Smoking rates among Aboriginal adolescents are the highest of any population group in British Columbia, Canada. Recent studies suggest that substance use is affected by gender and ethnic identity among youth. The purpose of our study was to explore the association of gender and ethnic identity with smoking behaviour among First Nations adolescents. This study is based on a convenience sample (i.e., an on-hand, readily available sample) of 124 youth (123 First Nations and 1 Métis) recruited at youth drop-in centres, health fairs, and cultural activities. We obtained information on demographics, smoking history, Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), composite measure of gender and gender identification (GID), and Moran's Bicultural Ethnic Identity Questionnaire (Bicultural ID). We examined the associations between gender role identification and cultural identification on current smoking status among First Nations youth by using logistic regression analyses stratified by gender. In stratified multivariate regression analysis among girls, current smoking was significantly associated with lower scores on the aggressive masculinity index of the Gender ID scale and the White/Canadian index of the Bicultural ID scale. Among boys, current smoking was significantly associated with higher scores on the affective femininity index of the Gender ID scale and lower scores on the White/Canadian index of the Bicultural ID scale. Reducing smoking among First Nations groups remains an important priority for tobacco control in



Group differences in Gender ID and Culture ID scales

Table 1 presents group differences in the Gender ID and Culture ID scales. First Nations girls had significantly higher femininity index scores on the BSRI than did boys [5.1 (SD = 1.0) vs. 4.2 (SD = 1.2), $p < 0.0001$]. Furthermore, First Nations girls had significantly higher affectionate femininity index scores on the CMGGID than did boys [3.4 (SD = 0.7) vs. 3.1 (SD = 0.8), $p = 0.021$]. No other group differences were observed between girls and boys in the Gender and Culture ID scales.

Correlates of smoking

In the first univariate logistic regression analysis—grade level—other smokers living in the same house, age, aggressive masculinity index of the CMGGID, and White/Canadian ID scale were all associated with smoking. In

the multivariate analysis of the total sample, smokers were significantly more likely to have dropped out of school or been expelled, live in the same house as a smoker, have lower aggressive masculinity index scores, and have lower White/Canadian ID scores (Table 2).

In the stratified multivariate analysis, girl smokers were significantly more likely to live with a smoker in the same house, and had lower aggressive masculinity and White/Canadian ID scores (Table 3), whereas boy smokers had significantly higher affective femininity scores and lower White/Canadian ID scores.

DISCUSSION

Our findings suggest that gender and ethnic identity may be important factors influencing smoking among First Nations youth. Also, comparing First Nations boys and girls in



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