

Anne Turner-Henson, Barbara Habermann  
 University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Nursing, Birmingham, AL, USA  
 Supported by CDC Special Interest Project

## Introduction

- Secondhand smoke exposure in US children's homes range from 11.7% to 34.2% based on number of homes with an adult smoker.
- Prevalence of secondhand smoke exposure among African Americans appears to be greater as compared to other groups.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions about secondhand smoke exposure among African American parents, both smokers and nonsmokers.

## Methods

- Participant criteria:
  - African American, Ages 19 – 45 years of age
  - Lives with a child (birth to 11 years of age)
  - Poor (based on qualifications for specific services)
  - Smoker or nonsmoker (but lives with smoker)
- Focus groups conducted using semi structured guide:
  - Knowledge and attitudes about secondhand smoke exposure
  - Smoking practices in the home
  - Rules and restrictions
  - Barriers to implement smoke-free homes
  - Factors that motivate change in smoking behaviors
- Focus groups (audio and video taped)
  - 2 groups with nonsmokers
  - 2 groups with smokers



Smokers: Husbands & Grandparents

*"he [husband] smokes where ever and he doesn't care"*

Smoking is bad for children

*"it's the number one killer among African Americans"  
 "you know him [smoker] puffing it and actually inhaling it ... he's adding extra impurities and I'm inhaling [plus my child too] what he exhales"*

Strategies to reduce exposure

*"open the windows, close the doors"*

*"sometimes I camouflage ...*

*you know, we keep a can of Lysol spray"*

*"we open the windows, close the doors, so they won't have to breathe the smoke"*

Nonsmokers: Lack of power

*"I limit as to how much she [grandmother] can smoke, and I limit the time ... hopefully, eventually, she'll give up"  
 "I live with my mom and dad, so I can't really say that they can't smoke so [I tell them] just don't come in my room or my kid's room"*

*"he [husband] has a hard head, and his is the only one who breaks the rules"*

## Results

Sample Characteristics (4 focus groups, n=29)

- Nonsmokers (2 focus groups)
  - All female
  - 24% had child in household with asthma/symptoms
- Smokers (2 focus groups)
  - Mainly female, one male participant
  - 24% had child in household with asthma/symptoms

Bedroom & bathroom most frequently reported site for smoking

*"... at some point when my nerves are bad and the kids, and it may be raining ... I smoke inside, otherwise I try to smoke outside"*

Impact on children

*"who wants to pick up a child that smells like smoke"  
 "cause my daughter went to school and it [smoke] was on her clothes and the teacher thought she smoked, she said no my mommy smokes"*

Children as the Motivator

*"it's bad for them [children]"  
 "I don't want my baby going to school smelling like cigarettes"*

Trusted Health Messengers

Family members  
 Spiritual sources: *"he will show you things in ... so many ways"*  
 Child's doctor or nurse

Smokers: Rules & Restrictions

*"they don't want to see my temper, and so my children say she gonna sprout horns and a tail [if you smoke]"  
 "it's getting so bad now to where, the police, if they see you [smoking] with kids in the car, they give you a ticket for it"*

Nonsmokers: Rules & Restrictions

*"rules don't work"  
 "it's his house"  
 "he has to have respect for my house and my rules"  
 "give him time to think about it ... don't stay on him hard ... encourage him not to smoke"  
 "be consistent with him"  
 "when it comes to smoking, you know, something's are just harder [to enforce] than others"*

## Discussion

- Children's presence in the homes seemed to decrease the report of adult smoking, though not for all participants
- Nonsmokers viewed **smoking as a complex behavior**
- Nonsmokers expressed a **lack of power**
  - Environment – living with a smoker family member
  - Male authority figures
  - Difficulty in setting rules for older persons
- Environmental measures (open windows, close doors) to reduce children's exposure were reported, though scientific evidence shows these measures are ineffective
- **Children were viewed as a motivator** not to smoke in the home/car

## Conclusions

- Children are powerless in home environments in terms of smoking adults.
- Targeting health messages based on findings from this study may be useful for specific populations such as African Americans.
- Findings from the study may be used to inform policy, such as smoking restrictions in public places or in personal cars.