

The Low SES Women & Girls Project: Building the Evidence to Inform Policy and Practice

Deborah McLellan, MHS, MA

October 26, 2010

Rockville, MD

Why tobacco control policy and low SES women and girls?

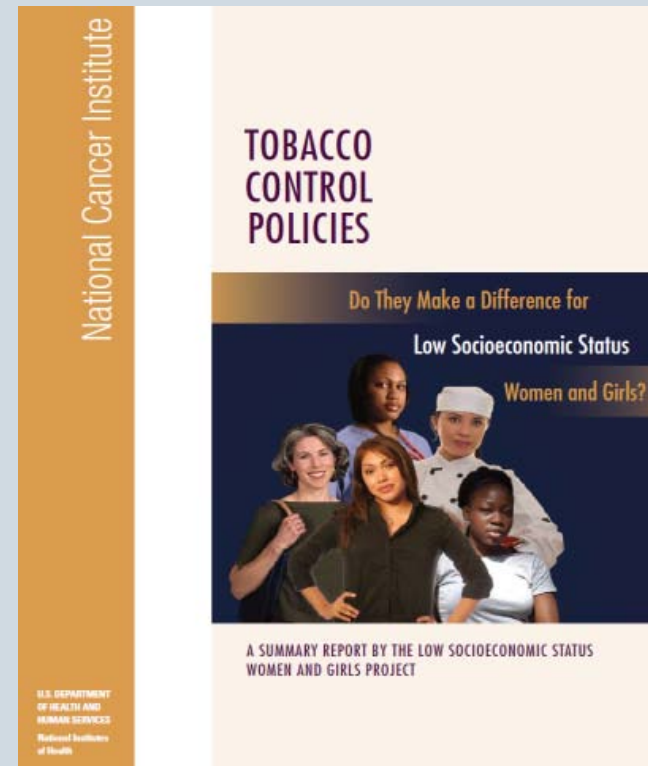
- Higher rates of smoking, lower rates of quitting, and increased risk of disease (NCI, 2008)
- Special social contextual issues, including tobacco industry targeting and power issues (USDHHS, 2001; Moore et al, 2006)
- More policy research needed on inequalities (Greaves et al, 2006)
- Dearth of research looking at intersection of class AND gender—Only 4 articles by 2004 (NCI, 2008)
- National and international calls for research and action (McLellan and Kaufman, 2006)

Purpose and goals of Low SES women and girls project

- Purpose: Examine the effects of tobacco control policies on diverse groups of low SES women and girls
- Goals:
 - Review existing research
 - Stimulate new research
 - Inform policy and build programs to reduce tobacco use among low SES women and girls

Phase I (2004-2007): Building evidence to inform policy & practice

- Meeting of experts, 2005
- Meeting report, 2008



Phase I (cont.)

- *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* (September, 2006)—Tobacco Control Policy and Low SES Women and Girls
- Built evidence on impacts of policy on low SES women and girls
- Findings suggested that tobacco control policies may have unintended consequences

Phase II

- Special issue of *AJPM*
- Criteria for articles:
 - (1) include women and/or girls of low SES
 - (2) assess tobacco-control policy
 - (3) unanticipated results of tobacco-control policies
- Researchers: study unintended consequences



Findings—Smoke-free policies

- Women and girls of low SES are more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke at home and work
- They are less able to negotiate enforcement at home and work
- Smoke-free policies led to stigmatization of female smokers, which may lead to:
 - barriers to cessation, poorer mental health, bonding between smokers, and increased social networking
- Safety concerns exist especially among women of low SES

Findings--other

- Nonsmoking nurses less likely to take breaks than smoking nurses and LPNs less likely to take breaks than RNs
 - May cause dissension in workplace and impact quality of work
- Tobacco control's dismissal of the regressive impact of excise taxes on low SES populations has opened doors for the tobacco industry to develop political alliances with groups representing those of low SES.

Dissemination

- Disseminated research findings through
 - Executive Summary and full meeting reports
 - Journal articles
 - Presentations at national and international meetings and conferences
 - Organizational mailing lists
 - Websites

Engaging stakeholders

- Strategy of 2005 expert meeting—diverse audience
- “I never thought that policy might have diverse impacts on different groups”
- “Who is the advocacy group for poor women?”

Conclusions

- Reviewed and stimulated research
- Beginning to inform policy and practice
- Success: growing U.S interest in low SES
- Challenges:
 - What and how to translate from findings to practice?
 - Who will be the leaders?
 - How will efforts be sustained?

Future Directions

- Document how tobacco control policy intersects with other social policies to impact the lives of women and girls of low SES.¹
 - Better metrics, design, frameworks, reporting, and policies
- Translate this knowledge to policy & practice
- Building comprehensive studies, programs, policies and campaigns for those with less socio-economic advantage

1. NCI, 2008