

Young people's attitudes to smoking and healthy diet: an exploration of perceptions of risk.

Evidence from recent research will be used to explore the 'vocabulary of motives' used by young people to account for risk-taking behaviour in connection with smoking and diet. The implications of the vocabulary of motives will be considered in terms of theories of risk perception and policies for health promotion, with particular attention being paid to the significance of

- emotion and feeling;
- responsibility and blame;
- consistency and ambivalence.

The paper draws on data from a survey of young people's health-related behaviour conducted in the East Midlands of England. Questionnaire responses were obtained from a sample of 15-16 year olds (n=804), providing both quantitative and qualitative data.

The limitations of the evidence will be discussed in terms of the survey size and representativeness of the sample. The limitations will also be considered in relation to the UK-based nature of the sample and the western theorizing on risk perception. The research raises questions about the applicability of risk theory to the Chinese context – particularly with respect to tobacco use and healthy eating. Questions will be raised about the policy implications with respect to tobacco consumption and diet changes in UK and China contexts.

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