# **Title: The affective economy of vaping: a qualitative analysis of responses to an online questionnaire**

## **Abstract**

E-cigarettes are believed to be less harmful than combustible tobacco. However, e-cigarettes have created divisions in public health: within and between academia, policy and practice. As e-cigarettes proliferate, and public health debates intensify, the best interests of those most at risk of smoking related illness can be lost in the furore. This article draws on 183 open-ended responses to a 2019-2020 questionnaire posted to various online vaping discussion forums to argue that emotion needs to become part of this discussion – particularly the emotional perspectives of vapers. The findings indicated that for many vapers, e-cigarettes are not just another potential harm reduction or alternative nicotine product. For many of the respondents, vaping is a social practice, but also more than this: an affective economy. In this economy, emotions do things, specifically they indicate the boundaries of a vaping community. This community is based on shared experiences of e-cigarettes creating positive new lifeworlds and changes to everyday life. However, it is also based on fears that these new lifeworlds are under threat. The aim of this article is to encourage more acknowledgment of this affective economy in the interests of reducing division and increasing reflexivity.

## **Key words**

E-cigarettes, vapers, emotion, affect, online questionnaire

Word count: All text in manuscript: 6,049

## **Introduction**

Vaping is believed to be less harmful than combustible tobacco smoking, and has extended users’ lives temporally and spatially (Keane et al., 2017). However, decisions on practice and policy are mired in fierce debate, both nationally and internationally. It is clear that e-cigarettes have elicited a range of strong reactions. However, there has been less acknowledgement of the emotional significance of these reactions. For instance, a recent commentary draws on something of a dualism between thought and emotion by calling for ‘more thinking’ and ‘less feeling’ on e-cigarette research (Warner 2018). Nonetheless, emotion has been considered as a valuable lens through which to understand health behaviours and public responses to public health campaigns. Lupton (2015), for example, has considered the tactics within public health campaigns which create disgust towards certain behaviours, and by extension, certain individuals. Her essay is a call to researchers and those working in public health to consider the consequences of both deliberately emotional campaigns, and of neglecting the emotional significance of certain issues.

This article takes the latter of Lupton’s above calls as a starting point to consider the emotional significance of vaping among vapers. Emotions have been receiving attention recently as underappreciated in comparison to the social and political determinants of health (Larson et al., 2020). This attention echoes previous work that has argued that ‘informed choice’ still dominates scientific and policy perspectives on health behaviour, and that these perspectives devalue less rational explanations for engaging in particular behaviours (Faircloth, 2013). Faircloth uses the example of breastfeeding, arguing that for some women, their decisions to breastfeed are based on the positive emotions, such as joy, that they associate with the activity. The women consider the science around breastfeeding as less important. In the case of Faircloth’s work, the emotions of the women generally aligned with the science, but Faircloth argues that there is still a resistance among academics, policy makers and other stakeholders in engaging more directly with emotional decision making processes.

We can see this focus on informed choice in research and commentary on vaping. Researchers and commentators regularly call for clearer communication of the harms of e-cigarette use in order to help people make an informed choice about their nicotine use behaviours (Dockrell & Green, 2019; Newton, 2019; Smith et al., 2021). However, qualitative research findings have considered much more than just unclear messages about the relative harms of e-cigarettes. E-cigarettes have been considered as enabling both smoking cessation and more positive nicotine-user identities (Keane et al., 2017; Notley et al., 2018). Vaping has given rise to new social practices, with it being a more discreet behaviour than smoking (Lucherini et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2021), and the flavours and technological aspects providing more recreational opportunities (Farrimond, 2017; Tokle & Pedersen, 2019).

What is striking about these findings is that they do allude to emotional experiences associated with quitting smoking, including: becoming healthier, developing new social practices, using space differently and pursuing activities which were previously closed off to participants due to smoking.

Some recent literature has touched on the strength of feeling that e-cigarettes have created among vapers. Keane et al's. (2017) paper is of particular interest, as they explore, through responses to an online questionnaire, the ways in which vaping has become incorporated into everyday practices and become part of an individual’s process of identity formation and meaning making in their life. Keane et al also note that some vapers are distrustful of public health bodies and the government, due to what some vapers see as needless restrictions which limit the availability of potentially life-saving devices and practices. Tokle (2020), and Morphett, Herron, and Gartner (2020) found similar distrust of official public health bodies and a preference among vapers to value personal vaping experience after conducting interviews with Norwegian vapers and analysis of responses to US media articles respectively. Although the wider literature on e-cigarettes still largely reflects social determinants with little unpacking of the emotional determinants.

Perhaps e-cigarettes have sparked emotional responses as they have entered national and international public health discussion at a time of increasing ‘post-truth’ discourse among the public where expert science and opinion is increasingly doubted, and emotional appeals gain traction (Horton, 2017). Journal pages are filled with competing opinions on the potential of e-cigarettes to help with harm reduction and/or smoking cessation and the ways in which they should be regulated (Tokle, 2020). These discussions reflect long-standing debates around harm reduction vs abstinence in tobacco research (Kozlowski, 2017). Arguably, e-cigarettes have accentuated these debates as they represent a particularly effective less harmful alternative to combustible tobacco, but also represent a potential new way to become a regular nicotine user. In the wake of e-cigarette popularity, some commentators have noted the emergence of ‘personal attacks’ on researchers and other stakeholders (Gornall, 2015; Lucherini, 2020a), while other commentators have condemned ‘scaremongering’ in media and academic journals which leaves vapers with conflicting messages about e-cigarette safety (Ross, 2015). Media coverage of e-cigarettes can also contribute to contrasting views on the ‘positives’ and ‘negatives’ (Morphett, Herron, and Gartner 2020), and coverage of lung disease and vaping in the USA has only deepened misgivings and confusion (Hammond, 2019). Our own personal, emotional and psychological reactions to e-cigarettes as they fit into tobacco research is something impossible to ignore, or objectively omit from our research. However, our avoidance of discussing these issues head-on, and engaging in more reflexive approaches to research may be causing vapers to lose trust in the media, public health bodies and researchers (Annechino & Antin, 2016; Tokle, 2020). Acknowledging this distrust and confusion is why there are calls for clearer communication on the harms of e-cigarette use (Newton, 2019). However, as vapers and the wider public seem to be placing less importance on expert and official messaging, it is questionable how effective clearer messaging may be for those already regularly using or thinking seriously about using e-cigarettes.

This lack of certainty and the dwindling influence and respect of experts and researchers, are not necessarily a bad thing. Instead, they can prompt new ways of approaching our work with a greater acknowledgement and appreciation of specific group responses to different phenomena, such as e-cigarettes and vaping. How we as researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and vapers talk and conceptualise emotion and affect in e-cigarette discussion is not straightforward and beginning to understand these emotional responses to e-cigarettes may help us consider our work more reflexively (Mykhalovskiy et al., 2019). Considering emotion may also help us act more empathetically both in our encounters with research participants and in the dissemination of our work through various outlets. With this perspective we may start to build trust that all researchers are working with the interests of the public’s health in mind.

How exactly these emotional determinants can be understood is still a nascent area of scholarship, with theories and techniques still developing (Larson et al., 2020). In order to appreciate this emotional significance, this paper will draw from an online questionnaire study to consider how Sara Ahmed’s (2004) concept of an ‘affective economy’ has built up around e-cigarette discussion in online environments. Central to Ahmed’s argument is the idea that emotions and affect ‘do things’ and are not necessarily bound within particular bodies or objects, but circulate, stick and slide among bodies and objects (Ahmed, 2004a). This mobility is driven by different contexts, histories and inter-personal relations, rather than discrete individual perceptions. As emotion and affect stick and slide, different bodies, objects and phenomena accumulate affective value that can come to signify common shared emotions and beliefs that shape the dimensions of the affective economy. People may then signify their inclusion or approval through drawing ‘capital’ from this economy in the form of actions and/or words that reflect these shared ideas and feelings (Ahmed, 2004a). Wilding et al. (2020) have considered how specific objects, such as digital communication devices, can be a foundation from which affective economies are enabled and maintained. In this way the emotions created by the existence and use of these devices goes beyond more widely understood functional uses to create community. In this article, I argue that e-cigarettes can have a similar impact, having become objects which have sparked an affective economy of vaping, in which emotions circulate, slide and stick among and onto different actors and actions to create affective value. E-cigarettes may therefore be much more than only alternative nicotine or harm reduction products.

## **Methods**

This study uses data from an online questionnaire which collected responses from September 2019 to February 2020. The questionnaire was posted to various online e-cigarette discussion forums, with permission from moderators and/or site owners. The forums were primarily UK based forums, but some, had a more international userbase. Ethical approval for this study was received from the, Faculty of Natural Sciences (non-psychology) Research Ethics Committee (Keele University).

The questionnaire was presented to forum groups as a study on the emotional significance of e-cigarettes in the lives of vapers. Closed questions asked about smoking and vaping practices and histories such as frequency, and how long they had been a vaper. Open questions invited textual answers with no word limit and covered issues such as general perceptions of e-cigarettes, how people felt e-cigarettes had changed their lives and what were their reactions and opinions to how e-cigarettes and vaping had been represented in various media.

A total of 183 responses were received. Initial coding was done thematically using Nvivo 12. Every response to an open-ended question was coded and themes were identified across responses to different questions. This initial coding was completed inductively, with a focus on broad emotional responses such as hope, happiness, frustration and anger which provided an initial mapping out of this affective economy of vaping (Supplementary Material). Further ‘theoretical coding’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006) proceeded with reference to the conceptual coordinates of affective economies. For example, codes identified how emotions ‘did things’ for vapers such as creating more positive lifeworlds or creating an ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy.

## **Findings**

The average age of participants was 49 years old. Most respondents were male (74%). Most participants lived in the UK (109), with the second most living in the USA (29). Smaller numbers of respondents lived in other countries spanning most continents. Most respondents were ex-smokers (74%) with most noting that they have quit with the help of e-cigarettes (77%). Therefore, the findings from this study largely reflect a group that is older, male, and predominantly ex-smoking vapers, from the UK and USA. The respondents are also likely to be particularly enthusiastic vapers given both their involvement with online forums and their willingness to spend time responding to the questionnaire. In the presentation of findings each participant is represented by a unique number, their self-reported age range and sex.

In what follows I consider textual responses from the questionnaire to further unpack how these emotions of hope and happiness but also of frustration and anger helped shape an affective economy of vaping. When presenting the evidence I have sometimes used larger quotes from specific responses and at other times I have used multiple brief responses. The brief responses do reflect the limitations of the questionnaire method, but multiple answers reflecting similar thoughts also help demonstrate the accumulation of affective value onto different objects, signs and actors.

**Hope and Happiness**

For many of the vapers, there was a feeling of renewed excitement and optimism that came with transitioning from smoking to vaping.

After trying many, many times to quit smoking, cold turkey, Champix, lozenges, patches, etc, I had finally given up on trying and accepted as fact that I would probably die of smoking related disease because I could not quit, no matter how hard I tried. Vaping gave me hope that maybe I could stop using tobacco – it has truly saved my life and for that I will be forever grateful. (#154,‘31-40’, F)

Many other vapers echoed the thoughts of the above respondent, noting relief that e-cigarettes had ‘finally’ helped them quit smoking, while others mentioned the ‘freedom’ that came with switching. Like Keane et al., (2017) found, respondents frequently considered e-cigarettes as life-changing and touched on improved physical and mental health, extended lifespans, reduced stigma, more time with family and financial savings. Existing nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) was routinely denounced as having not worked, or only done so temporarily. Vaping, on the other hand, was often considered a permanent switch. An important aspect of affective economies, is that emotions are not fixed onto certain objects, actors or experiences but move, slide and stick. As emotions move affective value is accumulated and shed onto and from different signs. These responses suggest that, while smoking, much negative affective value was accumulated. When writing about smoking, the respondents often seemed despondent, indicating that they were resigned to a life that would be shortened by their continued smoking. In transitioning to vaping, an affective economy in which more positive affective value could accumulate was more easily brought into existence as emotions are freed and mobile, thereby doing more things for the participants.

One of the things this circulation of positive emotions did was to open up more active lifeworlds due to increases in health and wellbeing, and more positive attitudes (see also Keane et al. 2017). For this particular sample of vapers, one of the most obvious things these emotions did was prompt them to join online communities of vapers. With the social aspect these communities brought, vaping was not simply a way to transition into this more optimistic outlook, but for many it became a central feature of their lives.

I just feel better, breath better … I also enjoy the social aspect much more, chatting on forums checking the various vape related news articles and watching e-cigarette related videos online so it has vastly increased my social circle from just family and a handful of people I work with to 1000’s of people worldwide I now converse with. (#53, 61-70, M)

Although the first sentence of the quote may apply to any successful quitting attempt, the subsequent description of the ‘social aspect’ demonstrates that e-cigarettes create more than just a healthier lifeworld. The recreational aspects of vaping (Farrimond, 2017), such as the customising of devices, the development of unique flavoured liquids, or general discussion about the latest technologies, seemed to sustain vaping for many of the respondents. E-cigarettes changed people’s lives, not just by helping them quit smoking but by ushering in a new social arena, one that is particularly active and friendly and that goes beyond the immediate social aspects of vaping to extend social lives more generally.

This extension of social lives was seen through multiple responses that indicated the emancipatory potential of vaping; allowing users to be more comfortable in their own bodies and identities.

No longer feel like an outcast of society. Lying to people about how much I smoked. I was ashamed of myself. (#38, 51-60, F)

No bad smell … you may kiss a girl without chewing gum first. (#42, 41-50, M)

It’s made me more confident in myself. I don’t think I stink constantly, and people don’t give me dirty glares for being too “pretty” to smoke. I get less sick throughout the year, my menstrual cycle isn’t as bad anymore, and I spend less money altogether. (#114, 18-30, F)

These short responses touch on similar themes from other research around stigma and identity among users of e-cigarettes (e.g. Notley et al. 2018), but they also contain more profound statements about how vaping has changed lives. E-cigarettes stopped one respondent being an ‘outcast’, another felt able to kiss a girl, another felt less external focus on her appearance, while another respondent indicated that the changes are ‘too difficult to explain it all’ (#154, 51-60, F). In the transition into an affective economy of vaping, emotions are freed and come to stick to so many other parts of life, providing a sense of optimism and satisfaction that went beyond just the immediate reduced risk to health that e-cigarettes provide over smoking.

For some of the respondents, demonstrating action to build vaping communities was an important element of personal capital within this economy.

Enthusiasm, evangelism, joy of quitting smoking are akin to a religious conversion for some. Without the passion of ex-smoking vapers driving the market e-cigarettes would be a niche and undeveloped product. We did this ourselves, no government help, no cost to the tax-payer. We’re pretty happy about that and want to tell everyone! (#14, 51-60, M)

Unlike other NRT which has been largely controlled in advertising and marketing, e-cigarettes developed with relatively little direct control (Elam, 2015). This has led to some vapers taking an ownership and responsibility for vaping and e-cigarettes. What was common across so many of the responses was a sense of pride in having transitioned from smoking to vaping. This strength of feeling may not have existed with smoking given the relatively negative identities associated with smoking (Notley et al., 2018). Being both a vaper and part of a vaping community were important signs of emotional capital which participants used to demonstrate new identities and processes of meaning-making in their lives.

### **Frustration and anger**

The hope and happiness that e-cigarettes and vaping can create is one part of this affective economy. However, e-cigarettes did not just create a sense of unbridled optimism, more cynical emotions also established the nature of this affective economy of vaping. The respondents referred to public health bodies, governments, and media as ‘lazy’, ‘ill-informed’ and ‘ignorant’. In response to a question about e-cigarette debates on social media, many responses touched on feelings of frustration that e-cigarette discussion had descended into a counter-productive ‘pro’ vs ‘anti’ (something similarly picked up on by researchers (see Lucherini (2020a) and Carroll et al. (2021)):

Everyone is opinionated, but nobody is knowledgeable. This leads to heated arguments where no-one will concede defeat, regardless of proof shown otherwise. (#108, 18-30, M)

Media has created a narrative of ‘us vs them’, social media winds up being where the discussion of us and them occurs. (#111, 41-50, M)

Both sides are going overboard IMO [in my opinion]. People are too lazy to think for themselves so just on whatever bandwagon is convenient. (#151, 51-60, F)

This frustration was not necessarily created by the fact that other people had diverging opinions about e-cigarettes than the respondents, but that the discussions around e-cigarettes had become divisive and irrational, and that this was to the detriment of smokers who may be considering e-cigarettes for harm reduction or smoking cessation.

Stronger feelings edging closer to anger could be identified in some responses. Similar to other findings (Annechino & Antin, 2016; Keane et al., 2017; Tokle, 2020), there was a sense of distrust among vapers, aimed at ‘government’ and public health orthodoxy. References to media representations as ‘scaremongering’ or ‘anti-vaping propaganda’ were frequent. This research was conducted at a time when the stories of deaths related to illicit e-liquids in the USA was a large focus of recent news coverage (especially in the UK and USA), however the respondents frequently mentioned their frustration at what they saw as misleading reporting more generally, suggesting this was a long-standing frustration.

‘Click-bait’ headlines to drive readers to look at an article, whether good or most frequently bad. Study press releases are frequently and regurgitated without any journalist looking in depth at the veracity. Trivial or totally implausible ‘studies’ … reported as gospel whilst positive studies receive little to no coverage. This undoubtedly has had an effect on worsening public perception of the safety of e-cigs and nicotine alike. (#35, 61-70, M)

The quote reflected a theme of how the vapers railed against what they saw as deliberate misrepresentation of the efficacy and safety of e-cigarettes. These media represented a threat to the vapers that could have an immediate and enduring impact. It was not only that vaping was perceived as under attack but also that current smokers might be dissuaded by the negative coverage and unreliable research.

While anger towards news media was common among the responses, anger towards other specific groups was less clear. However, there were some specific mentions of ‘tobacco control advocates’ and the ‘medical industry’ as a vaguely defined group of researchers who seem to neglect the perspectives of vapers themselves.

I am angry, disgusted and disappointed with a lots of the medical industry who have dismissed/ignored the opinions ex-smokers who used vaping. (#10, 51-60, F)

There should be more studies about vaping but use vapers in the study not machines where they turn up the wattage to get an outcome that they wanted before the study started. (#84, 71-80, M)

In an affective economy, emotions do not reside in a particular body, instead emotions circulate between and through bodies, working to create an ever fluid differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Ahmed, 2004a). Along with the perceptions towards the social media debates on e-cigarettes, these quotes demonstrate how frustration slides and moves between attachment to different bodies, from public health researchers, media reporters and general unspecified ‘others’. It is in this circulation that the emotions ‘do things’, in this case working to align a community of vapers, against threats posed by others.

Conversely, some of the vapers expressed their approval at research which took the opinion of vapers seriously. In particular, the questionnaire was both praised and critiqued by vapers. Some felt it contributed to research from the vapers’ perspective and so challenged what they saw as the predominant trends in research that privileged ‘expert’ views that they see as driven by different agendas.

I’m very pleased to see this approach taken to vaping research. It seems that the vast majority of research in this area ignores the vaper experience. (#105, 51-60, M)

There should be more surveys involving people who have quit smoking using e-cigs. (#95, 71-80, M)

While there were no overly critical takes on the questionnaire, the sense of distrust of researchers that some of the respondents held came through in some of the final responses which asked respondents if they wanted to add any further thoughts about the topic.

I hope you use that data impartially. There are too many studies out there that don’t deserve the name. (#92, 41-50, M)

All I ask is that you be honest in your survey as I have been in taking it. Thank you. (#159, 51-60, F)

Ahmed (2004a) writes that fear based on the misrecognition of other bodies can serves to create distance between groups and so reaffirm prejudices and distrust. These quotes suggest a possible similar misrecognition of researchers: that they are ill-informed, dishonest, and have a tendency to misreport findings. There is a fear that is both mobile: found in the circulation of social media, news reports, research, and somewhat fixed onto the bodies of researchers. Indeed, recent literature has shown that researchers are themselves aware and fearful of this anger from vapers and others, and this has affected the choice of research topics and directions (Annechino & Antin, 2016; Carroll et al., 2021; Lucherini, 2020a).

## **Conclusion**

The findings from this research touch on wider discussions around how to advance positive changes in public health practice and policy. While researchers and other stakeholders are concerned about e-cigarettes ‘camps’, ‘sides’, and ‘personal attacks’ (Annechino & Antin, 2016; Gornall, 2015; Lucherini, 2020a), vapers, many of whom are former smokers, seem to be developing a more troubled relationship with public health bodies, the media, researchers and other stakeholders. This general distrust of ‘experts’ indicates the need for new ways of engaging with vaper communities that reflect how knowledge is interpreted, and how emotions come to build into affective value. A first step might be greater recognition of the affective economy of vaping. The findings indicate an affective economy that, “work[s] by generating a subject that is endangered by imagined others whose proximity threatens not only to take something away from the subject (jobs, security, wealth), but to take the place of the subject. The presence of this other is imagined as a threat to the object of love” (Ahmed 2004b: 43). In this affective economy of vaping, love for e-cigarettes and fear of e-cigarette regulation worked together to create a swirl of emotion that did various things for the vapers – most hopefully opening up new lifeworlds and most despairingly creating a mistrust of other actors associated with the regulation and research of e-cigarettes and vaping. We need to appreciate that e-cigarettes are here to stay and they have had a profound effect on people’s lives. For many vapers, e-cigarettes are more than just smoking cessation aids or a recreational practice, but carry complex affectual value, which is associated with myriad aspects of social and emotional life. Along with this appreciation, we need to realise how important e-cigarettes have become as a symbol, to which emotions of happiness, hope, frustration and anger, along with ideas of life and freedom have stuck. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that debates and confusion around e-cigarettes that have characterised research and policy, and have often bled into media representations of e-cigarettes, have been interpreted as threats to the future availability of e-cigarettes and resulted in a loosely defined collection of actors (including researchers, policy makers and media) to which feelings of mistrust and frustration are directed.

Ahmed (2004a; 2004b) considers affective economies as created by complex movements of both love and hate and argues that one emotion cannot be understood without appreciation of the other. For example, love of one’s country in one context, might be interpreted as hate for immigrants in another context. With e-cigarettes, a similar complex interpretation and movement of emotions seems to be occurring. Some of those working in tobacco research may take a more careful perspective on e-cigarettes, noting the involvement of the tobacco industry in their development (Collin, 2016) and the potential for vaping to ‘renormalise’ smoking or act as a gateway to smoking (Saebø & Scheffels, 2017). This standpoint reflects a long-standing mistrust of the tobacco industry, where affective values have come to create an ‘us’ of researchers and tobacco control advocates, against a ‘them’ of the tobacco industry (de Andrade et al., 2017; Hastings et al., 2012). Researchers, policy makers and media are therefore also working within their own affective economies and affective communities, which can stem from deep rooted moral psychologies (Kozlowski, 2017). Tobacco researchers are working with a passion for public health, and are rightfully suspicious of tobacco industry involvement (Hays & Hurt, 2019). However, the evidence in this article suggests that this passion for the public’s health is potentially being interpreted as ‘ill-informed’ or ‘lazy’ by some vapers. As the affective economies of researchers and vapers clash, the happiness and hope that circulates among vapers moves into frustration and anger directed towards researchers and policy makers. Likewise, the passion of researchers can turn to fear and disillusionment (Carroll et al., 2021; Lucherini, 2020a). The question is, how do we work to change these affective economies to ones that are more positive and can have productive impacts on the public’s health? This research suggests one possible route – that could be the increased inclusion of vapers in research. While this questionnaire research did this only nominally, future work may help us obtain a deeper understanding of the emotional determinants of health (Larson et al., 2020).

The questionnaire does present limitations to these findings. One weakness of questionnaire data is that it is not as rich as other qualitative data. Questions in a questionnaire are specific. Textual responses are generally short and do not allow for further probing and contextualising of responses. This means that more affectual and embodied meanings of e-cigarettes are relatively underexplored. However, questionnaire responses do not necessarily lack emotional resonance. Keane et al, (2017: 471) found that short questionnaire responses can be “noteworthy for their intensity”, while I and other researchers have also previously considered multiple shorter answers to a questionnaire, as conveying an ‘affective’ quality (Faircloth, 2013; Lucherini, 2020b). A particular drawback of using questionnaires to map out an affective economy, is that the responses themselves are static and do not move between members of the discussion forums. How such brief thoughts on a subject may move among people, can be important in mapping out the surface and depth of an affective economy – as Deem (2019) highlights in exploring how an alt-right affective economy can be traced through tweets and retweets. Nonetheless, these short questionnaire responses do reflect responses from a specific discussion group in which thoughts, feelings and emotions are already circulating and so they can be useful for identifying accumulated affective value that shapes an affective economy. Finally, it is important to note that the respondents were a particularly enthusiastic group of vapers. Research with less engaged and more casual vapers will need to develop other, perhaps less direct, approaches to explore how affective economies of vaping are developing.

This paper demonstrates that we can learn from thinking with an emotional and affective lens, through ‘more feeling’. I argue that research in public health need not follow a dualism where thinking is separate to feeling (Warner, 2018), but that both inevitably go hand-in-hand (Lupton, 2015). Trying to separate them, means we may miss out on deeper understandings of the significance of e-cigarettes to people’s lives, and run the risk of becoming more ‘out-of-touch’ with the actual users of the devices.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank all of the respondents for taking the time to complete the questionnaire and providing thought provoking answers. I would also like to thank the journal editor and two anonymous referees for their constructive and supportive comments on an earlier version of this manuscript.

## **Declaration of Interest Statement**

The author has no declaration or conflict of interests to declare.

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