

# Sometimes a Cigar [Magazine] is More Than Just a Cigar [Magazine]: Pro-Smoking Arguments in *Cigar Aficionado*, 1992–2000

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Since its first issue in 1992, few periodicals have enjoyed the rapid growth and international popularity of *Cigar Aficionado*. Although the magazine professes to simply celebrate “the good life and the joys of cigar smoking,” we argue that it serves a more insidious function; specifically, the periodical supplies readers with 7 persuasive strategies aimed at rebuking dominant anti-smoking health assertions: (a) the cigars-are-not-cigarettes argument, (b) the life-is-dangerous argument, (c) the health-benefits argument, (d) the moderation argument, (e) the old-smokers argument, (f) the bad-science argument, and (g) the good-science argument. These pro-smoking arguments ultimately serve to relieve the cognitive dissonance associated with the consumption of a potentially deadly product and to maintain a loyal readership, free from guilt or anxiety.

From 1964 to 1993, cigar consumption in America had been steadily decreasing at a rate of 66% (Baker et al. 2000). In 1993, however, the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported a 50% increase in the number of cigar smokers, whereas during this same period, the number of cigarette smokers declined 2% (Satcher, 1999). Furthermore, unlike the demographic profiles of cigarette smokers, converts to ci-

gar smoking are, according to both the National Cancer Institute (NCI; 1998) and the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Rigotti, Lee, & Wechsler, 2000), better educated and wealthier. However, the educated and the wealthy were not the only groups discovering cigar smoking. A Robert Wood Johnson Foundation national survey reported that 37% of boys and 16% of girls between the ages of 14 and 19 had smoked a cigar during the previous year. In several states, in fact, cigar use among adolescent boys exceeds the use of smokeless tobacco (NCI, 1998). And although the majority of these new smokers are White and male, the number of African Americans and women over the age of 18 smoking cigars has also reached an all-time high.

The unfettered growth of cigar smoking has been attributed by governmental agencies, health researchers, cigar companies, and cigar smokers to the emergence of the "cigar lifestyle magazine" *Cigar Aficionado* (Baker et al., 2000; NCI, 1999). When the first issue of this magazine hit the streets in the fall of 1992, cigar smoking was an obscure activity primarily practiced by a small segment of blue-collar workers who smoked inexpensive, machine-made cigars and, of course, proud fathers of newborn babies (NCI, 1998). By the end of the magazine's third full year (1995), *Cigar Aficionado* was America's most popular lifestyle magazine with a readership of more than 400,000 per issue, and the premium cigars (i.e., hand-rolled, expensive, and imported) the magazine promoted could be found in thousands of fledgling cigar shops, night clubs, cigar bars, golf courses, race tracks, shopping malls, upscale restaurants, luxury hotels, gas stations, grocery stores, sports arenas, liquor stores, and even at the menswear sections in department stores (NCI, 1998, p. 203).

Among those attributing America's new love affair with the cigar to the rise of *Cigar Aficionado* is Consolidated Cigar Holdings, Inc., one of the big-five international cigar companies in the world. They openly credit the magazine for the "positive and improving image of cigar smoking" resulting in "the significant increase in consumption and retail sales of cigars" (Consolidated Cigar Holdings, Inc., 1996, p. 3). In addition, Culbro (another of the big-five cigar giants), Dan Blumenthal (of the *Hoyo de Monterrey* and *Punch* brand cigars), and the Newman family (of the *Cuesta-Rey* brand cigars) also credit *Cigar Aficionado* as the "driving force behind the surge" for their products and the "renaissance of cigars" in America (Culbro Corporation, 1996, p. 2; *Cigar Aficionado*, Autumn 1995, p. 128; *Cigar Aficionado*, Spring 1995, p. 89).

Many newly converted cigar smokers also credit *Cigar Aficionado* for the change in cigar smoking's popularity and image. A reader in the winter of 1993, for instance, tells of the impact that his "first issue of *Cigar Aficionado*" had on his "developing appreciation for cigars": "I believe that I would not have taken up cigar smoking," he asserted, "had it not been for the way your magazine has presented the beauty of the cigar and the pleasure it provides" (p. 17). In the same issue, another reader discussed his transformation from a man who thought cigar

smoking was “appalling” to a man who is “looking forward to enjoying my first *Romeo y Julieta*.” Since that first issue, the reader concluded, his “attitude toward quality cigars has changed completely” (p. 25).

Far from denying culpability for America’s newest tobacco fad, *Cigar Aficionado* openly boasts of its role:

Imports will top 240 million cigars for 1996. The premium cigar market will have more than doubled in the span of three years ... What happened? While it sounds self-serving, it’s hard to ignore the fact that this change probably can be tied directly to the launch of *Cigar Aficionado* in the autumn of 1992. (August 1996, p. 97)

As Marvin Shanken, editor and chief of the magazine, brags, “History and government statistics tell us that the premium cigar market in America can be categorized into two eras: pre- and post-*Cigar Aficionado* magazine” (*Cigar Aficionado*, Summer 1995, p. 15). Of course, health agencies, such as the NCI, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Centers for Disease Control, note *Cigar Aficionado*’s “success” with far less exuberance.

With such general agreement about *Cigar Aficionado*’s role in the mass promotion of an at-risk “lifestyle,” one might assume that the magazine has been highly scrutinized by researchers and funding agencies. Unfortunately, with the exception of the 22-page chapter on the general promotion and marketing of cigars in the NCI’s Monograph No. 9, *Cigar Aficionado*’s persuasive strategies and messages have been ignored. Consequently, how *Cigar Aficionado* both encourages and maintains cigar smoking remains unanswered.

We assert that *Cigar Aficionado* has aided the growth and maintenance of cigar smoking by accomplishing at least three interdependent tasks. First, the magazine has been the major conduit for cigar advertisers to promote their products to Americans. What makes this task even more remarkable is that the advertising and promotion of cigarette and smokeless tobacco products have been restricted through voluntary measures since 1965. “These codes have a number of provisions, such as prohibiting models in ads who appear to be under the age of 25, not to associate smoking with glamour, physical fitness, or wealth, and not to place brand-name tobacco products in movies” (NCI, 1998, p. 225). Interestingly, however, *Cigar Aficionado* has not adhered to those voluntary codes. If the codes were strictly applied to cigar advertising, asserted Falit (1997), “current cigar advertising and promotion would be severely restricted” (p. 241).

A second but related cause of the growth and maintenance of cigar smoking is the “marketing efforts” by *Cigar Aficionado* that have “promoted cigars as symbols of a luxuriant and successful lifestyle” (Altman, Levine, Coeytaux, Slade, & Jaffe, 1996). In Shanken’s periodical, cigars are presented as (a) “lavish, even outrageous, luxuries and indulgences,” that (b) often evoke a “romantic vision of pre-revolutionary Cuba,” and that (c) are necessary props for every stud or playboy

(NCI, 1998, pp. 198–217). Adding to this glamorization, sports heroes, female supermodels, pop icons, and movie mega-stars have lent their names and reputations to support this increasingly popular cultural image. Michael Jordan, Madonna, Mel Gibson, David Letterman, Jack Nicholson, and Kevin Costner, to name only a few, have all appeared in *Cigar Aficionado* touting the joys and glamour of cigar smoking. Along with contemporary personalities, *Cigar Aficionado* also capitalizes on the elite ethos of historical, literary, intellectual, artistic, and political personalities who have smoked cigars. Fidel Castro, Winston Churchill, Ernest Hemingway, Sigmund Freud, Luciano Pavarotti, Thomas Edison, and John F. Kennedy have all been awarded ample space to sell cigars in Shanken's periodical. The transformation of the image of cigars has been so successful, in fact, that by 1998, a large faction of both smokers and nonsmokers alike began to "perceive cigar smokers as relatively well-to-do, well-educated, older managers or executives" (Baker et al., 2000, p. 738). Most remarkably, smokers were also more likely to associate athleticism with cigar smoking.

Finally, and most relevant to this study, *Cigar Aficionado* has been able to attract and maintain readers' loyalty through the recurring and systematic creation of pro-smoking arguments. In every issue, the magazine supplies readers with an average of 9.4 pro-smoking messages that either (a) highlight the health benefits of smoking, (b) attack medical research that links cigar smoking with health risks, or (c) debunk the "general misconception" that cigar smoking is dangerous. Taken in total, these messages serve to relieve the cognitive dissonance that arises when individuals engage in at-risk behavior and secure life-long patrons and cigar smokers.

Although the promotion and glamorization of cigars are both worthy of study, we believe that it is the creation of pro-smoking counterarguments that pose the greatest threat to health efforts. Although the promotion and glamorization of cigars may entice a consumer to try his or her first cigar, it is the consistent foray of pro-smoking messages, aimed at rebuking anti-smoking information, that keep patrons lighting up in the face of overwhelming scientific evidence that this "hobby" is life-threatening.

Consequently, it is the purpose of this project to analyze the pro-smoking messages created by *Cigar Aficionado* for its readers. Although the magazine may profess to simply celebrate "the good life," we argue that it serves a more insidious function; specifically, the periodical is responsible for supplying the counterattitudinal messages that serve to relieve the cognitive dissonance associated with the consumption of a potentially deadly product by adding cognitions, trivializing dissonant information, selectively exposing readers to pro-smoking information, and creating a social support network of fellow cigar smokers.

It is our belief that with a fuller, richer understanding of the reasons why cigar smokers continue to smoke in the face of overwhelming evidence of its dangers, health communication researchers and practitioners will be able to create better, more effective anti-smoking messages that are less vulnerable to pro-smoking at-

tacks and more likely to change at-risk smoking behavior. Toward this end, this study adopts a rhetorical approach to analyze the content of *Cigar Aficionado*, from its first issue in the fall of 1992 to the last issue of the 2000 calendar year—a total of 41 magazines with approximately 8,000 pages of text. The authors searched all issues for pro-smoking arguments throughout all features of the magazine, including letters to the editor, editor's statements, celebrity interviews, cover stories, profiles of individuals, cartoons, and the like. "Pro-smoking arguments" were defined as any assertion made in the periodical that defended smoking against anti-smoking health claims (e.g., cigar smoking is dangerous to one's health). After each pro-smoking argument had been isolated and copied, DeSantis' (2002) pro-smoking coding scheme was used as a loose template to organize the arguments. As the actual rhetorical analysis progressed, however, new and augmented categories began to emerge from the data. In the end, therefore, the more than 380 pro-smoking arguments found in *Cigar Aficionado* from 1992 to 2000 were organized into the following seven groupings: (a) the cigars-are-not-cigarettes argument, (b) the life-is-dangerous argument, (c) the health-benefits argument, (d) the moderation argument, (e) the old-smokers argument, (f) the bad-science argument, and (g) the good-science argument. Throughout the remainder of this article, we supply a brief review of the prevailing medical research on the hazards of cigar smoking, establish a theoretical foundation for the study, and detail the seven recurring pro-smoking arguments generated by *Cigar Aficionado* and its readers. Finally, some implications of this study are discussed with an eye toward health-prevention efforts.

## MEDICAL RESEARCH ON CIGAR SMOKING

The growth in popularity of cigar smoking has generated increasing interest by medical researchers. Before 1988, cigar-smoking research was virtually ignored by the medical establishment. By 1996, however, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; the Massachusetts, New York, and California Departments of Public Health; the American Cancer Society (ACS); the NCI; the Roswell Park Cancer Institute; and the U.S. Surgeon General, David Satcher, began devoting proportionate attention to "America's newest fad."

Faced with this new inundation of varied and diverse research on the subject, the NCI, in collaboration with more than 50 scientists both within and outside the federal government, created a 247-page monograph systematically reviewing the complete corpus of cigar-smoking research. That same year (1998), the ACS also gathered to examine, organize, and summarize the health risks of cigar smoking. The NCI and ACS found that cigar smokers experience many of the same cancers as cigarette smokers, largely because toxic carcinogens and nicotine are absorbed through the mucus membranes in the mouth. It should be noted that cigars are far

larger in mass than cigarettes and require more time to smoke. This leads to increased duration of exposure to nicotine and tobacco-based carcinogens. Although cigar smokers are less likely to inhale cigar smoke, the higher concentration of nicotine in cigars makes this form of tobacco intake at least as addictive as cigarettes. Furthermore, the second-hand smoke generated by cigars is equally toxic as that of cigarettes (Baker et. al, 2000). Given cigar smoking's unprecedented popularity, both the NCI's and the ACS's reports conclude by calling for a more concerted effort in examining the health ramifications of cigar smoking and the development of prevention strategies.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

With the emerging information about the hazards of cigar smoking, the presence of more than 70 years of findings on the dangers of tobacco, and the general consensus by Americans that smoking is hazardous to one's health, many nonsmokers and health agencies are perplexed by individuals who continue to smoke cigars. One possible explanation for this seemingly illogical act can be found by reconceiving *Cigar Aficionado* as not simply a magazine about the good life, but as a major source of cognitive-dissonance reduction.

Cognitive dissonance is one of the best-known theories in the social sciences. Its premise is simple: When faced with information at odds with our current attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors, we experience cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Dissonance can be produced by a number of sources: logical inconsistency, cultural mores, opinion generality, or past experience (Festinger, 1957). Smokers are likely to experience cognitive dissonance from all four sources. For example, smokers might experience dissonance due to a logical inconsistency if they believe smoking is harmless but are confronted every morning with a sore throat and a hacking cough. The ever-increasing pressure of cultural mores against smoking in public places and the growing intolerance of second-hand smoke could be another source of dissonance. Opinion generality could be a source of dissonance for smokers who generally believe themselves to be logical people but continue to smoke in the face of solid scientific data that tell them that smoking is unhealthy. Finally, past experience in the form of a family member's untimely death due to a smoking related illness could also cause dissonance.

Cigar smokers therefore constitute a population that is likely to experience a great deal of cognitive dissonance. As Simon, Greenberg, and Brehm (1995) stated, "dissonance effects are most likely to occur when the individual feels personal responsibility for a counter-attitudinal behavior [e.g., consciously buying and smoking the cigar] with foreseeable aversive consequences [the smoking related illnesses described by mainstream medical research] under conditions of low

external justification [e.g., most cigar smokers are not forced or pressured by peer groups to smoke premium cigars]" (p. 248).

Once dissonance is experienced, there are several routes of dissonance reduction (Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Festinger, 1957). First, a person can change one of the dissonant elements: attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors. Most studies in the area of cognitive dissonance focus on attitude and belief change as a result of dissonance reduction (Simon et al., 1995). The relation of cognitive dissonance to smoking-related attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors has been explored in several studies. McMaster and Lee (1991) reported that smokers offer more rationalizations for smoking and engage in more distortions of logic regarding smoking than either nonsmokers or former smokers. These researchers attribute their findings to the process of cognitive-dissonance reduction. Similarly, Halpern (1994) discovered that current smokers experience more cognitive dissonance about smoking than former smokers. Taken together, these studies indicate that the ubiquitous nature of anti-smoking information has successfully created cognitive dissonance in smokers and that this dissonance has manifested itself in the denial of the health consequences of smoking.

The second way a person can reduce cognitive dissonance is by adding cognitions that are compatible with current attitudes or behaviors (Festinger, 1957). A person can selectively seek information that supports current attitudes or behaviors or that denigrates the source of the dissonance (Frey, 1986; Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, Frey, & Thelen, 2001). Efforts at selective exposure focus on adding cognitions that make one's attitudes or behaviors seem more justifiable or logical. Tagliacozzo (1981) tested the principle of selective exposure by asking 514 young adults to circle items on a list of health risks and consequences that would be relevant to smokers. Smokers failed to circle a greater percentage of items relevant to smoking consequences than nonsmokers. This relation was true even for smokers who reported a willingness to quit smoking at some point in the future. Forced information exposure (e.g., showing a smoker a study on cancer rates), on the other hand, can backfire (Festinger, 1972).

The third route of dissonance reduction involves decreasing the importance of the cognitions or elements that are causing dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Researchers have termed this route "trivialization" (Simon et al., 1995). This is a cognitive strategy that seeks to reduce the importance of one or more of the dissonant elements. A series of four studies conducted by Simon et al. demonstrated that trivialization is a mode of dissonance reduction that is often much easier than changing one's attitudes or behaviors. It is unfortunate that no studies have thus far examined the role of trivialization in the reduction of smokers' cognitive dissonance.

Finally, social support also can provide a powerful means of dissonance reduction. Although the social environment can be a source of dissonance, dissonance can be reduced via social interaction as well. "The existence of dissonance will



lead to seeking out others who already agree with a cognition that one wants to establish or maintain and will also lead to the initiation of communication and influence processes in an effort to obtain more social support” (Festinger, 1972, p. 256). Dissonance may even drive a person to seek out an ever-wider circle of acquaintances who share his or her opinion, because dissonance is reduced in proportion to the number of people an individual knows with the same opinion (Shaw & Costanzo, 1970).

In the section that follows, we highlight the ways in which *Cigar Aficionado* accomplishes all four dissonant-relieving functions. We show that the periodical (a) attempts to change attitudes and beliefs about the hazards of cigar smoking, (b) adds cognitions by supplying pro-smoking counterarguments, (c) trivializes anti-smoking efforts and the findings of the medical establishment, and (d) highlights the lives of famous, affluent, athletic, intellectual, and influential cigar smokers to create social support for their cigar-smoking readers.

## THE ANALYSIS

From its first issue in 1992 through its last issue of 2000, *Cigar Aficionado* has provided readers with more than 380 pro-smoking arguments. As Table 1 illustrates, that averages to an astonishing 9.4 pro-smoking arguments per issue. Although these arguments varied in intensity, size, bravado, and frequency, they all adopted one of seven persuasive strategies aimed at rebuking dominant anti-smoking assertions: (a) the cigars-are-not-cigarettes argument, (b) the life-is-dangerous argument, (c) the health-benefits argument, (d) the moderation argument, (e) the old-smokers argument, (f) the bad-science argument, and (g) the good-science argument.

### The Cigars-Are-Not-Cigarettes Argument

One of the most recurring and multilayered pro-smoking arguments in the pages of *Cigar Aficionado* is the cigars-are-not-cigarettes argument. On 69 different occasions throughout the 8 years under review, readers found a motif that presents cigars as a safe, viable alternative to cigarettes by granting medical legitimacy to cigarette-smoking research but denouncing any attempt at drawing correlations or inferences to cigar smoking due to “significant differences” in both product and process. This perception that cigars are less harmful than cigarettes, asserted Kirchner (1999), serves not only as an incentive for individuals to start smoking cigars but also as a significant barrier in persuading users to quit. Specifically, *Cigar Aficionado* asserts that (a) cigarettes are addictive, but cigars are not; (b) cigarettes are inhaled, but cigars are not; (c) cigarette tobacco is impure, but cigar tobacco is not; and (d) cigarettes are consumed in mass quantity, but cigars are not.



TABLE 1  
 Frequency of Argument Types—Pro-Smoking Arguments in *Cigar Aficionado* (1992-2000)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Cigars vs. Cigarettes</i>	<i>Life is Dangerous</i>	<i>Health Benefits</i>	<i>Moderation</i>	<i>Old Smokers</i>	<i>Bad Science</i>	<i>Good Science</i>	<i>Total Arguments</i>	<i>No. of Issues</i>	<i>Avg. per Issue</i>
1992	3	1	7	6	2	3	4	26	2	13.0
1993	11	13	11	8	4	10	6	63	4	15.8
1994	15	9	14	5	5	15	6	69	4	17.3
1995	7	5	16	3	4	6	4	45	4	11.3
1996	7	4	7	5	5	4	2	34	4	8.5
1997	8	3	6	5	2	3	3	30	5	6.0
1998	9	4	10	6	3	8	3	43	6	7.2
1999	6	6	7	6	5	9	4	43	6	7.2
2000	3	2	7	4	3	9	3	31	6	5.2
Totals	69	47	85	48	33	67	35	384	41	9.4

One significant difference highlighted in the pages of *Cigar Aficionado* is that cigarettes are highly addictive, whereas cigars pose no such threat. In the winter issue of 1993, for instance, Dr. James Weiss, a cigar smoker and cardiologist, acknowledged that “cigarette smoking is a bad habit. . . . a true addiction.” He even admitted, “the lower-tar, low-nicotine variety just postpones eventual trouble” (p. 206). Consequently, Weiss reported giving up “those coffin nails” for a safer alternative. Now he claims he only smokes fine cigars when he decides he wants to, not when an addiction demands.

Marvin Shanken, *Cigar Aficionado*’s editor and chief, reiterated this same argument. In a November 1999 editorial, Shanken informed readers that “the reality is that cigars don’t create the kind of compulsive addictions that other tobacco products may cause.” Many regular cigar smokers “often go days or weeks without smoking at all” (p. 21). In a September 1998 editorial, Shanken again told readers that their fear of cigars is unfounded. Backing this bold claim with statistics, albeit dubious, Shanken reported that a survey on his web page “shows that 92% of cigar smokers smoke one cigar or less a day, and 71% smoke three or less a week.” This is hardly, he concluded, “the profile of a product that fosters addiction” (p. 27).

Cigars are also differentiated from cigarettes in the pages of *Cigar Aficionado* in that they are not inhaled. The implied logic of this reasoning is that as long as cigar smoke is not inhaled into the lungs, it poses no significant health risk. This line of reasoning, of course, does little to address the other health risks not associated with inhalation, such as lip, mouth, and gum cancer. A prototypical example of this line of reasoning comes from a 1994 interview with Fidel Castro, perhaps the most famous cigar smoker of the 20th century. Castro told his American readers that “cigarettes are more harmful than cigars” because “people inhale them.” Later in the interview, Castro bragged that his “lung capacity was always good because” he “never inhaled smoke,” a fact that has enabled him to “preserve” his health well into his late 60s. Finally, he informed readers that he has “never” in his life inhaled. “I simply enjoy a cigar because of its aroma, its taste, and watching the smoke” (Summer 1994, p. 53).

The quality of tobacco used in cigarettes and cigars also becomes a recurring pro-smoking argument for *Cigar Aficionado*. As one patron’s published letter asserted, “cigarettes contain many carcinogenic ingredients.” Cigars, on the other hand, contain “all natural ingredients, 100 percent biodegradable, replenishable and salutary.” In a bold but confident eye toward the future, the reader then prognosticated that cigars “will be recognized in 20 or 25 years as one of the most benign products extant” (Winter 1993, p. 15).

Famed singer and songwriter Paul Anka supplied a similar line of reasoning to *Cigar Aficionado*’s readers in the summer of 1996. Throughout his career as a performer, Anka told interviewer Joe Rhodes, he never smoked or drank in fear of damaging his throat. Then, a friend “taught me that cigars are pure, not like ciga-

rettes at all. Once you realize the process of what goes into a cigar," he concluded, "you realize it's not going to hurt you" (p. 229).

Along with quality, the quantity of units smoked is used as a dividing line separating "harmful" cigarettes from "benign" cigars. Actor Ben Gazzara told readers of his "four pack of cigarettes a day" habit. The morning he woke up with a "whistle" in his bronchial tubes, however, forever changed his thinking about smoking. Now he only smokes in moderation, "a few cigars a day"—an act that is virtually impossible with cigarettes (Autumn 1994, p. 112).

Similarly, writer David Shaw addressed "the difference between cigars and cigarettes" by arguing that "there really is no such animal as a 'moderate' cigarette smoker." Most cigar lovers, on the other hand, are moderate smokers who enjoy a great smoke every now and then (Autumn 1992, p. 75). Editor Shanken, whose magazine has, "never closely associated premium hand-rolled cigars with cigarettes," wholeheartedly agreed:

We [*Cigar Aficionado*] believe that the two products are as different as night and day, and we have said repeatedly that a product made for occasional enjoyment and relaxation in moderation bears no resemblance to a product designed to be smoked in large quantities. (September 1998, p. 27)

By contrasting cigarette and cigar smoking, *Cigar Aficionado* creates a cognitive buffer for its readers between the established, and reasonably indisputable, research on cigarette smoking and their reader's cigar consumption. The creation of this buffer is achieved by highlighting four key differences between cigarettes and cigars and then asserting that because of these differences, no legitimate comparisons can be drawn between the two products. This line of reasoning, however, seems to set up the proverbial straw-man argument. After reviewing the salient medical research that discusses the harmful effects of cigars, we were unable to find any reports that drew direct comparisons between the medical establishment's findings on cigarette smoke and the harmful effects of cigars. What we did find, however, was a separate body of research that specifically focused on the hazards of cigar smoke. Although these reports were discussed in other pro-smoking arguments created by *Cigar Aficionado* (e.g. the good-science and bad-science arguments), they were never mentioned during the use of the cigars-are-not-cigarettes argument. By de-emphasizing this cigar research, and emphasizing the cigarette research, *Cigar Aficionado* creates a line of reasoning in which the anti-smoking advocates and the medical establishment are naïve, if not illogical, and their beliefs and scientific studies irrelevant. This strategy of trivializing some medical research while ignoring other medical research (selective exposure) is clearly an attempt to reduce cognitive dissonance. In the end, the research on cigarette smoking is unexpectedly, and ironically, used to relieve anxiety and guilt about smoking cigars.

### The Life-Is-Dangerous Argument

A second argument highlighted in *Cigar Aficionado* contrasts cigar smoking with life's other dangers. These dangers run the gamut from driving a car and breathing polluted air to drinking alcohol and eating junk food. In general, however, such hazards are either *environmental* dangers (i.e., dangers imposed on individuals without their direct consent) or *behavioral* dangers (i.e., dangers freely chosen by individuals). From the perspective of *Cigar Aficionado*, however, both types of dangers are far more hazardous and ubiquitous than cigar smoking. Subsequently, readers were told an average of once every issue that worrying about something as insignificant as cigars is not only a waste of time and energy, it is also diverting attention away from life's "real dangers."

The first type of danger highlighted by *Cigar Aficionado*, and subsequently juxtaposed with cigar smoke, was noxious environmental dangers. Of the many externally imposed hazards highlighted, the most cited of these was automobile and bus exhaust. As a reader from Arizona argued, it is not cigars we should be worried about. "The brown haze that you see over the metropolitan area is not tobacco smoke, but car exhaust!" The reader then turned to his own "statistical" comparisons to illustrate his point more effectively. He asserted that "if it takes two packs of cigarettes a day over 20 years to kill a person, it will probably take 60 years for secondhand smoke to take effect. Inhaling car exhaust straight from the pipe kills in about 10 minutes" (Summer 1994, p. 24).

A few months earlier, Shanken wrote a similar response to a young man named Jay who wrote to *Cigar Aficionado* about his right to breathe clean air. "Instead of writing to complain about 'clean air' to a cigar lovers' magazine," Shanken started, "why not write to the mayors of most cities in the United States? . . . Every time a bus changes gears a huge black mass of smoke billows out of the tailpipe. One billow equals 10,000 cigars." This stern reprimand ended by Shanken questioning whether this young man is "crusading against a small fish when there are whales swimming in [his] own back yard" (Summer 1993, p. 16).

*Cigar Aficionado* also highlighted the myriad behavioral dangers millions of anti-smoking Americans willingly subject themselves to that are far worse than the cigar smoke they obsess over. In the March issue of 1999, for instance, reader Mark Searfoss wrote to rebuke what he calls "junk science" and anti-smoking "skeptics" have lost all "proper perspective" on life and its dangers. He told readers that he "takes pride in his health by exercising regularly and eating sensibly." What truly angers him, however, are anti-smokers who live a far more dangerous lifestyle than he does but have the nerve to lecture him on his cigar. "Heck," he challenged, "I wonder how many cigar antagonists know their own blood pressure and cholesterol levels" (p. 30).

Concurring with this general sentiment, another reader tells of a recent survey that showed that most Americans admit that they engage in risky activities. "More

than half of the men and a fifth of the women ... risked losing their lives by driving too fast or recklessly, riding a motorcycle without a helmet, volunteering for hazardous military missions or engaging in dangerous sports.” And many of these same people, the writer asserted, are the same people who are outraged by cigar smoke (Winter 1993, p. 206).

This line of reason was taken to new heights a year later when Shaken dedicated a whole page to an editorial about smoking, life’s behavioral risks, and anti-smoking hypocrisy:

Risk is part of living. Skiing, riding motorcycles, flying private airplanes, drinking whole milk, eating bacon, savoring butter and cream sauces or digging into a hamburger and fries are all things that have health risks. ... Risks are everywhere, and if you can somehow get through the dangers of living every day, a relaxing smoke ... will make the passage all the sweeter.” (p. 15)

This rhetorical strategy was adopted in more than 26 other *Cigar Aficionado* pieces as well. A small sample of the magazine’s other “inconspicuous dangers” includes the consumption of alcohol, coffee, chocolate, butter, meat, caffeine, hamburgers, French fries, and Chinese herbs; laying out in the sun; using a gun; walking your dog; living in cities; jogging; and, believe it or not, eating green M & Ms.

Whether *Cigar Aficionado* contrasts cigar smoking with environmental or behavioral dangers, the message remains constant: The world around us is far more dangerous than a cigar. Consequently, to worry about smoke is simply misdirected. Functionally, this pro-smoking argument (a) draws attention away from the hazards of cigar smoking by adding cognitions about other health risks in the readers’ lives, (b) which in turn creates a world where virtually everything is dangerous. Subsequently, quitting cigar smoking becomes a futile act in the face of overwhelming and omnipresent dangers. Paradoxically, therefore, by increasing readers’ anxieties about the hazards of life, they are able to decrease their anxiety about smoking.

### The Health-Benefits Argument

A third, and most popular, pro-smoking argument found in *Cigar Aficionado* highlights the health benefits of cigars. Contrary to overwhelming evidence from the medical establishment, *Cigar Aficionado* asserts that cigar smoking offers far more health advantages than health risks to their users. Of the many benefits punctuated in the magazine, however, none is more repetitive than stress reduction. In fact, in the 41 issues of *Cigar Aficionado* that have been published from 1992 to 2000, the stress-reducing health benefits of cigar smoking have been mentioned on more than 85 different occasions—or an average of more than twice per issue. Of all the individuals who have commented on such benefits, however, none are more

persuasive or credible than the cigar-smoking doctors who write to, or are interviewed by, the magazine.

Dr. Charles Carluccio, for instance, in an article called, "On Doctor's Orders," told readers that "as director of a center for stress-related disorders," no other method, "from biofeedback to yoga," has the advantages of smoking a cigar. And while he does not "prescribe cigars in place of Xanax or Valium," he would never "discourage cigar smokers." In fact, he concluded, "I have given cigars to patients on occasion and have received my share of some great cigars in return" (Summer 1994, pp. 189–190).

Similarly, Dr. M. Hal Pearlman, an ear, nose, and throat surgeon who has seen his share of throat cancer from cigarette smokers, reassuringly told readers that "one of modern life's greatest dangers is psychological stress." This "stress," Pearlman asserted, "is a major cause of numerous health threats, including heart attacks, high blood pressure and ulcers." "Any way of reducing stress," he told his cigar-smoking readers, "has unmeasured benefits" (Spring 1993, p. 130).

For Dr. Lee Shulman, however, it is the "opportunity to share my continuing passion for the only tasteful 100 percent natural, fat- and-sodium-free indulgence with [his] medical students, residents and faculty colleagues" that makes his job as a reproductive geneticist so gratifying, pleasant, and relaxing. Such a balance between cigars and work, he reported, is "essential" to his "overall well-being" as both a doctor and a human (Autumn 1994, p. 27). Concurring, pulmonary physician Dr. Richard Pericut also maintains his "overall well-being" by cigar smoking, a hobby started in his late teens. "I find that smoking cigars is medicinal both for the mind and the body." And as long as one does not inhale, he informed readers, there is no reason not to "enjoy one, sometimes two cigars" a day (August 2000, p. 21).

Cigars' benefits, however, do not stop with the mind and spirit. Coach Phil Jackson, for example, believes that cigars "act as a powerful contracting mechanism because it absorbs a great deal of one's bodily fluids" (September 1998, p. 169), whereas a letter writer in May 1997 believed that they have the power to "cure the common cold" (p. 30). Adventurist Louis Sapienza did one better and pronounced that cigars can even "serve a vital function in the fight against malaria" (May 1997, p. 434). Other equally miraculous benefits discussed in the pages of *Cigar Aficionado* have included weight loss (Summer 1996, p. 249), a "pain killer for bee stings" (March 1999, p. 33), the improvement of digestion (Summer 1994, p. 53), an antidepressant (Winter 1992, p. 48 and Summer 1995, p. 18), and even a means of "memory recovery" (July 1999, p. 104).

The health-benefit argument is *Cigar Aficionado's* only pro-smoking argument that is rhetorically offensive, not defensive. It takes the form of an initial affirmative statement by supplying readers with reasons why they should smoke. In contrast, the other motifs supply readers with reasons why they should not quit smoking. Or, to put it another way, the health-benefit argument does not defend smoking from a previous anti-smoking assertion, but takes an offensive stance by highlight-

ing smoking's benefits. This fact, however, does not negate its goal and impact. Like the other dissonance-reducing arguments in *Cigar Aficionado*, the health-benefit argument also (a) makes smokers feel positively toward the consumption of cigars, (b) reduces their anxiety about the act of smoking, and (c) equips them with pro-smoking counterarguments.

### The Moderation Argument

In 48 of the 384 coded messages, *Cigar Aficionado* asserted that smoking in moderation eliminates most, if not all, health risks associated with cigar smoking. And, as with their other arguments, Shanken and *Cigar Aficionado* wisely utilized the credibility of medical professionals. Within this motif, however, the doctors' approval is offered second-hand, and any contradiction to this advice by other medical professionals is never mentioned. Writer David Shaw, for example, told readers of the day that he asked his doctor whether smoking a cigar after dinner was dangerous. "I called my doctor immediately for advice," he remembered. "He assured me that one cigar a day would pose no threat to my health." Consequently, Shaw has been "smoking a cigar a night, four to six nights a week, ever since" (Autumn 1992, p. 75). Editor Shaken has also passed along second-hand medical advice. In 1993, for example, Shanken told readers "many doctors and nutritionists say that whole milk, cheese, red meat, and ice cream can be greater health risks than moderate cigar consumption" (Summer 1993, p. 7). In 1997, Shanken mentioned another unidentified doctor "who reviewed the research" on cigar smoking and told him "moderate smoking habits aren't as dangerous as the anti-cigar forces are trying to portray them" (May 1997, p. 19). Finally, in 1994, journalist Ken Shouler's doctor reportedly told him that moderately smoking "three cigars a day [or 21 cigars a week, or 1,092 cigars a year] is about the same as zero a day." (Autumn 1994, p. 99).

As these examples illustrate, what specifically constitutes moderation is rarely agreed on. For some, like one reader, "one glorious premium cigar a day" is moderate (March 1997, p. 35), whereas another "rarely smoke[s] more than one a day and never more than three" (Autumn 1993, p. 18). As for doctor James Weiss, "a decent quantity to limit yourself to is two or three a day" (Winter 1993, p. 206), a number also supported by Groucho Marx (Spring 1993, p. 34). For James Suckling, the "normal rate of smoking is three to four a day" (Winter 1992, p. 113). Milton Berle, on the other hand, believed that a moderate number was "four, maybe five." "That certainly can't hurt you," he asserted before his death (Spring 1995, p. 119). The most famous and often quoted "moderation reference," however, originated with Mark Twain. Twain wrote, "I smoke in moderation—only one cigar at a time." Clemens' smoking philosophy, asserted Alejandro Benes, "make him a role model for the ages" (Winter 1995, p. 73).

From a rhetorical perspective, the pro-smoking motif of moderation was the most obvious and simplistic of all the arguments found in *Cigar Aficionado*. At its



essence, this line of reasoning asserts that cigar smoking is only dangerous if done in excess. Below the surface, however, a more insidious pattern emerges. In the 10 years of the magazine's existence, no smoker has ever been accused of excessive cigar smoking. Whether it was David Shaw's 3 per week (152 cigars a year), Francis Ford Coppola's 10 per week (520 cigars a year), or George Burns' 10 a day (3,650 cigars a year), moderation for *Cigar Aficionado* becomes what anybody believes it to be. Consequently, the argument has become so malleable that it is able to suit any reader's cigar lifestyle, regardless of their excesses and abuses. This corresponds to the route of cognitive-dissonance reduction of trivialization. The consumption of cigars, in the amount that any reader chooses, is moderate and therefore not harmful. To argue otherwise, *Cigar Aficionado* asserts, runs counter to good, common sense.

### The Old-Smokers Argument

Another pro-smoking argument that appears in *Cigar Aficionado* attempts to counter the medical establishment's assertion that smoking kills, or at the very least, shortens one's life. Throughout the 41 issues that were analyzed, the editor, journalists, and letter writers highlighted smokers who lived long and illustrious lives on 33 different occasions.

The youngest of the elderly smokers featured in the pages of *Cigar Aficionado* were the parents of a reader from Suffolk, England. Their son tells readers that both of his parents have "smoked all of their lives and continue to do so." At the age of 67, both still "encourage physical awareness and participation from all six of their children" (March 1998, p. 35). Similarly, in the autumn issue of 1992, readers heard of a 74-year-old smoker who has been lighting up "since the age of 18," and sees "absolutely no reason" to quit now (p. 27). A year later, in the spring of 1993, an 80-year-old smoker boasted that he would have asked his much younger doctor whether he should quit for health reasons, "but," he humorously concluded, "he died three weeks ago" (p. 41).

As one could imagine, the 98-year-old comedian and cigar icon George Burns was one of the most often cited geriatrics. In fact, in the winter issue of 1994, Burns, with cigar in hand, graced *Cigar Aficionado's* much-coveted cover. In the issue, Burns told readers that if he'd taken his "doctor's advice and quit smoking when he advised" him to, he "wouldn't have lived to go to his [doctor's] funeral" (p. 61). Burns was so popular, in fact, that he was mentioned in more than 26 different articles. This popularity places him in a solid second place, ahead of his long-time friend and cigar-smoker, Milton Berle, who, by the time he reached his 86th birthday, was mentioned more than 15 times in the pages of *Cigar Aficionado*. The most often mentioned geriatric however, was the 90-year-old Winston Churchill—a 10-cigar-a-day smoker. Churchill not only had a internationally recog-

nized cigar *size* named after him (e.g., the Churchill cigar is at least  $7 \times 47$ ), but has been mentioned in *Cigar Aficionado* on over 43 different occasions.

Although Burns, Berle, and Churchill may have been the most popular seniors in *Cigar Aficionado*, they were not the oldest smokers to be highlighted in the magazine. In the May issue of 2000, readers heard about the 102-year-old Cuban grandmother, Guadalupe Diaz Duque. Mrs. Duque, we were told by her English-speaking grandson, “never was without a cigar in her mouth” and an “occasional glass of rum” in her hands. With such indisputable proof, her grandson confidently told readers to “forget about cigars being bad for your health.” If it did not hurt an old woman, it most certainly won’t hurt you (p. 269).

The granddaddy (forgive the pun) of all old-smoker arguments, however, came from a reader who wanted to “lay to rest the hysterical unsubstantiated ravings of Rep. Henry Waxman and his misguided cohorts” who publicly supported the Surgeon General’s assertion that “smoking cigars is dangerous.” “I am enclosing,” he wrote, “a partial list of some well-known personalities who were (some still are) smokers, and the ages that they reached (some are still alive).” His full-page list included the names and ages of more than 95 older smokers, including such diverse personalities as Thomas Edison (age 84), Cole Porter (age 71), Dwight D. Eisenhower (age 79), Cary Grant (age 82), and Katharine Hepburn (age 87; Winter 1994, p. 27).

Since the births, and subsequent deaths, of Burns, Berle, Churchill, and the other smoking luminaries highlighted by the magazine, hundreds of millions of individuals have died from smoking-related illnesses. The American Medical Association, in fact, estimates that one out of every four smokers will die from smoking related illnesses. Unable to dispute such statistics on the mortality rates of smokers, *Cigar Aficionado* instead chose to highlight exceptions to the medical conclusion that life expectancy is shorter in smokers. In the words of cognitive-dissonance theorists, *Cigar Aficionado* is adding new cognitions to readers’ awareness of the effects of cigar smoking. In this route of cognitive-dissonance reduction, readers are able to balance their knowledge of the deaths of smokers with stories about the many people who have smoked well into old age. Specifically, *Cigar Aficionado* (a) highlights the smoking anomalies that have defied the odds and have become the exception to the rule and (b) neglects the much larger list of smokers who have prematurely died—an editorial policy that has not been breached in the magazine’s 10 years of existence. Such reasoning, and indeed the whole of the old-smokers argument, would be humorous given its flawed logic if it was not so potentially dangerous for *Cigar Aficionado*’s hundreds of thousands of readers.

### The Bad-Science Argument

If *Cigar Aficionado* is to adequately attack anti-smoking assertions based on scientific evidence, scientific evidence itself must ultimately come under attack. The

challenge for Shanken's magazine, then, becomes how to vilify and criticize a culturally deified and trusted institution like medical science. For, as Robert Pirsig (1974) has noted, the church of God has been replaced by the church of science in 20th-century America. Given these parameters, therefore, *Cigar Aficionado's* counterarguments follow the basic rules of modernity, working within the maxims of empirical evidence, logic, reason, and calculability, while attacking medical research for its (a) improper scientific methodology and (b) lack of significant empirical data.

*Cigar Aficionado's* attacks on methodological procedures primarily challenge the sampling practices of tobacco researchers. In an article titled "Just The Facts," for instance, the magazine criticized researchers for including international respondents. These countries, asserted Shanken, are as "diverse as Denmark and Brazil, England and China, where the environmental circumstance, lifestyles, and situational stresses and hereditary influences are very different." To apply these findings to America is simply "bad science" (Winter 1993, p. 206).

To remedy this sampling flaw, *Cigar Aficionado* often used its own "more accurate" statistics gathered from readers accessing their web site to challenge the medical community's shoddy methods. Shanken reported that he "has surveyed 130,000 online subscribers" and found that "the average age of the typical cigar smoker is 35, not 15, as the anti-smoking forces would have you believe." Furthermore, he reported that because everyone in his survey was a cigar smoker, his findings are a "far broader sampling of true cigar smokers than any government studies" (January 1999, p. 21).

*Cigar Aficionado* also attacked anti-smoking methodology for not clearly distinguishing cigar smokers from cigarette smokers. In June of 1998, Dr. Robert Jay Fish, a cosmetic dentist from Florida, wrote a special feature for the magazine in which he told how he uncovered the truth about cigar smoking. After a "diligent search," he wrote, he was unable to find any research on cigar smoking that was not contaminated by data from cigarette smokers." He further stated that "cigar smokers were only occasionally included in tobacco usage studies; however, cigarette smokers were almost always included and made up the bulk of the subjects" (p. 361). Similarly, a patron from Easthampton, New Jersey, wrote to berate the inexcusably sloppy methodology of scientific reporters, who "denounce cigar smoking by citing studies or reports (many of which may be cigarette-based), evidently with little or no technical comprehension of the very data they claim to understand" (March 1998, p. 30). Finally, staff writer Mark Edward Stover chastised scientific research for being "fraught with a number of potential methodological problems," including "misclassification," "[mis]identification," and the neglect of "socioeconomic" factors in contributing to illnesses in smokers (Autumn 1994, p. 16).

Sampling procedures were not the only problem *Cigar Aficionado* had with the medical establishment's methodology. Repeatedly, the magazine openly accused

researchers of tainting truth with subjectivity, anti-smoking sentiments, and political agendas. In November of 1998, for example, Shaken claimed that the authors of the Environmental Protection Agency's report on second-hand smoke "approached the study with a predetermined result in mind," and "manipulated the research and analysis" to arrive at their own conclusions (p. 27). In May of 1997, Shaken accused the authors of the Surgeon General's Report of "bolstering" the findings when they became too "politically unpalatable" for anti-smoking advocates (p. 19). Even the highly respected NCI report was accused of being "designed to obscure" the facts. This monograph, Shaken indicted, was clearly "intended" to "manipulate" and "scare" the public away from cigar smoking (April 2000, p. 214; July 1998, p. 21).

A final approach for countering the medical establishment's assertions is to simply deny that any "significant" or "applicable" evidence exists. Readers heard, for example, of a "professor from Emory University Medical School" who wrote that "no hard data exists to demonstrate that secondary or side-stream smoke from cigars is dangerous" (Winter 1993, p. 206). Again in 1999, readers were told that there was no "concrete scientific validation" for claiming that cigar smoking is dangerous (March 1999, p. 30). In the summer of 1994, Dr. M. Hal Pearlman, M.D., simply called the "reputed deleterious reported effects ... hogwash" (p. 24). Even the beloved Uncle Milty (a.k.a., Milton Berle) denied the existence of any research linking cancer with second-hand smoke. "They've never proven it," he proclaimed, "Never" (Spring 1995, p. 119).

### The Good-Science Argument

For *Cigar Aficionado*, not all science is bad science. On 35 different occasions, the magazine validated certain claims made by medical research if they were useful in relieving dissonance for its readers. When possible, *Cigar Aficionado* would accomplish this task by extracting specific segments, sections, or statements from reports that found no health risks associated with cigar smoking. In January of 1999, for instance, *Cigar Aficionado* reported that even the National Institutes of Health report on cigars "had no conclusive evidence about the effects of occasional cigar smoking" (p. 21). In autumn 1994, the magazine reported that Switzerland's "Environmental Tobacco Smoke and Mortality" study "found no increased risk of lung cancer among nonsmokers exposed to second-hand smoke" (p. 16). Even the much-maligned Environmental Protection Agency was credited for their review of 11 studies on passive smoking. Of the 11, reported Mark Stover, "three actually observed a decrease in lung-cancer rates" (Autumn 1994, p. 16).

Because most tobacco research found at least some health risks associated with cigar smoke, *Cigar Aficionado* was forced to also rely on segments or statements from studies that, according to *Cigar Aficionado*, found only "limited" or "negligi-

ble” effects. In April of 2000, for example, Jacob Sullum told readers that although the NCI found that “daily cigar smokers get oral and esophageal cancers almost as often as cigarettes smokers did,” these same smokers “face much lower risks of lung cancer, coronary heart disease and chronic obstructive lung disease” (p. 212). Readers were also told of the 1985 ACS study in which cigar smokers were “only 2 percent more likely to die during a 12-year period than nonsmokers.” By contrast, the article concluded, “the mortality rate was 69 percent higher for men who smoked a pack a cigarettes a day” (April 2000, p. 212).

Readers also heard some dissonance-relieving news from a student journalist who was “completing a master’s degree in public health and therefore knows something about statistics and epidemiology.” She wrote of an “intellectually honest” cardiologist who tells his patients that a daily cigar is only “increasing their risk a little bit” (April 2000, p. 216). Readers were even told in the summer of 1993 that the Surgeon General’s annual report on smoking “contains disclaimers on cigar smoking, citing its relatively limited impact on health” (p. 7).

Two interesting observations emerge from the analysis of *Cigar Aficionado*’s good-science arguments. First, most of the research, agencies, and factual sources praised in the good-science motif had been previously vilified on methodological grounds in the bad-science motif. The Environmental Protection Agency, ACS, NCI, American Medical Association, National Institute of Health, Surgeon General, Centers for Disease Control, and World Health Organization have all been both castigated for their conclusive anti-smoking claims and praised for their more negligible assertions about the health risks associated with cigars.

Second, and perhaps most ironic, *Cigar Aficionado* turned science against itself. By (a) extracting anomalistic scientific claims about the hazards of smoking while (b) neglecting or harshly criticizing the much larger body of scientific research that links cigars with smoking related illnesses, the magazine pitted the bad science of the anti-smoking forces against the strategically selected good science of Shanken and *Cigar Aficionado*. The end product of this strategy closely models the selective exposure route for controlling cognitive dissonance; *Cigar Aficionado* clearly says that the only information that readers need pay attention to is that which points to a negligible level of risk of cigar smoking.

## DISCUSSION

This research illustrates that readers of *Cigar Aficionado* are being fed a steady stream of distortions and even outright lies about the consumption of tobacco through cigars. By offering a conceptual reframing of tobacco as a behavior that contributes to physical and mental well-being and by providing counterarguments to the anti-tobacco messages being produced by the medical establishment (or even friends and family), *Cigar Aficionado* soothes any dissonance smokers may

feel about their habit. We suspect that very few people, including tobacco-prevention researchers and practitioners, could imagine that such a vociferous source of pro-smoking arguments exists in plain sight, especially one that is not sponsored by the tobacco industry itself. This, ironically, may be contributing to its success in promoting the consumption of cigars, because the source of these arguments does not have a direct vested interest in selling cigars.

Understanding the mechanisms that smokers are using to reduce dissonance is a vital first step in creating effective anti-smoking messages. Given the increased popularity of cigars and the documented health detriments associated with cigars, there is a need for a corresponding effort to reduce the consumption of this tobacco product. Thus far, there has not been a single nationally coordinated effort targeting cigar smokers.

Countering smokers' impassioned love for the cigar and their equally impassioned contempt for anti-tobacco information is unlikely to be an easy task. Nonetheless, we believe that the results of this study point to a number of potentially fruitful routes for mass-media campaigns. First, the pro-smoking argument that smoking cigars in moderation is unlikely to cause harm appears to be particularly vulnerable to counterargument by health-communication practitioners. As indicated in this study as well as a study by DeSantis (2002), cigar smokers apparently define moderation as whatever quantity they smoke. The medical research indicates, however, that there is a direct, linear relation between the quantity of cigar tobacco smoked and the incidence of disease. This needs to be made clearer to cigar smokers.

Second, the parallels between cigars and cigarettes should be emphasized. Cigar smokers believe that cigars are "pure" because they are not treated using chemical processes. The logic appears to be that these chemical processes create the cancer-causing compounds in cigarettes, toxins that cigar smokers believe are not present in cigars. Campaign messages should emphasize the fact that tobacco itself contains toxins; these toxins are absorbed through the mucus membranes in the mouth even when the smoke is not inhaled. Thus, cigar smokers are susceptible to many of the same cancers (and at the same rate) as cigarette smokers. Moreover, cigar smokers appear to draw a distinction between cigars and cigarettes on the basis of the number of "units" smoked. Reminding smokers that 1 cigar can equal 10 or more cigarettes may help to put this argument to rest.

Third, comparing the level of risk associated with cigar smoking to other daily activities may help to prevent smokers from using this rationalization. Contrary to what *Cigar Aficionado's* editor (and readers) assert, cigars are considerably more risky to consume than, say, peanut butter or green M&Ms. Comparing the risks of cigar smoking to activities that many people worry about, such as the risk of dying in an automobile or plane crash or even the risk of dying because of exposure to urban pollution (a favorite theme in *Cigar Aficionado*) should demonstrate how absurd this rationalization is.

## CONCLUSION

It has been the purpose of this article to argue that from 1992 through 2000, *Cigar Aficionado* dedicated a significant portion of its open space (i.e., space not reserved for advertisers) to reduce the cognitive dissonance of its readers through four of the most well-documented dissonance-reducing strategies. First, *Cigar Aficionado* added cognitions about cigars by (a) highlighting the so-called health benefits of smoking, (b) featuring elderly men and women who have presumably experienced no ill-effects of smoking cigars, (c) directing readers to consider the many dangers that all people face in everyday life, and (d) supplying readers with four differences between the harmless cigar and the harmful cigarette. Second, *Cigar Aficionado* used selective-exposure strategies by (a) presenting only medical information that advocated a pro-smoking agenda, (b) highlighting only medical findings that were inconclusive and ambiguous, and (c) discussing only smokers that are healthy, happy, and rich. Third, *Cigar Aficionado* made liberal use of trivialization by (a) ridiculing researchers and agencies that disagree with the magazine's pro-smoking assertions, (b) disparaging the motives and intelligence of anti-smoking politicians and advocates, and (c) denigrating the methodological practices of medical researchers who disagree with Shanken's claims. Fourth, *Cigar Aficionado* created a social support network comprised of (a) "real people" who write in to the magazine to complain about anti-smoking policies, anti-smoking activists, and wives who forbid smoking in the house; (b) class elites, pictured in the "Moments to Remember" section of each magazine, smoking their favorite cigars next to their race cars, yachts, golf courses, private jets, and mansions; (c) beautiful, sophisticated women such as Linda Evangelista, Gina Gershon, and Demi Moore who love cigars and men who smoke cigars; (d) masculine, fashionable "movie stars" such as Kevin Costner, Jack Nicholson, and Denzel Washington; (e) athletes and coaches such as Wayne Gretsky, Babe Ruth, and Michael Jordan; (f) noted historic and political leaders such as Fidel Castro, Winston Churchill, and John F. Kennedy; (g) famed business moguls such as J. P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, and J. D. Rockefeller; and, most disturbingly, (h) physicians who both advocate cigar smoking and negate their health risks. By assembling such a large and illustrious cast of cigar smokers, *Cigar Aficionado* has created an impressive community of fellow smokers that lend support and validation to their readers. Intensifying this impact, *Cigar Aficionado*'s society of successful, rich, beautiful, and famous smokers were often juxtaposed with a counter-community of uptight, illogical, uninspired, and unglamorous "anti-tobacco puritans."

In closing, we believe that as long as the health community continues to ignore *Cigar Aficionado*'s role in supplying cigar smokers with anti-smoking rebuttals, any attempt at creating prevention messages will fail. Throughout the 10 years of the magazine's existence, Shanken and his magazine have spent considerable time and space constructing complex pro-smoking messages and responding to the



shifting medical and political climate of the last decade. For instance, when the Surgeon General, the NCI, the ACS, and the Environmental Protection Agency each released their reports to the public, *Cigar Aficionado* quickly responded by assembling a myriad of specifically targeted counter-attacks aimed at each report's most vulnerable sections. In contrast, no health agency has ever responded to any message disseminated by *Cigar Aficionado* (even though a single issue of the magazine is read by more Americans than all of the previously mentioned reports combined). Furthermore, unlike tobacco studies, whose findings are written to objectively report conclusions to other researchers, *Cigar Aficionado's* counter-attacks are written to persuasively alter the beliefs of cigar smokers. Thus, whereas the medical establishment is supplying *information* to the public, *Cigar Aficionado* is supplying *persuasion* to smokers. We are forced to conclude pessimistically, therefore, that until prevention agencies begin to take *Cigar Aficionado* more seriously, view the magazine as a diligent pro-smoking force, and become more strategic and dynamic in their message construction, cigar smokers will continue to light up, dissonance-free.

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