

ABSTRACT

Objectives. This study assessed the exposure of adolescent girls to cigar images in women's magazines from 1992 to 1998.

Methods. Data were obtained from the 5 women's magazines with the highest readership of adolescent girls.

Results. We found a significant upward trend in cigar images portrayed in women's magazines and a significant increase in the portrayal of women cigar smokers over the period observed. Cigar images were less likely than cigarette images to promote tobacco or nontobacco products. Among advertisements, nearly all those that featured cigars promoted nontobacco products; advertisements featuring cigarettes overwhelmingly promoted tobacco products.

Conclusions. Between 1992 and 1998, adolescent readers of women's magazines were increasingly exposed to images of cigars. (*Am J Public Health.* 2001;91:286–288)

Exposure of Adolescent Girls to Cigar Images in Women's Magazines, 1992–1998

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After advertisements for small cigars were banned from television and radio in 1973, cigar consumption began a steady decline that lasted for almost 20 years. That decline has ended. Overall cigar consumption increased by 47% between 1993 and 1997, and consumption of large cigars increased by 68% during this period.¹

The 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 22% of the adolescents in grades 9 through 12 were current cigar smokers (defined as having smoked a cigar at least once in the 30 days preceding the survey).² The same study indicated that 11% of the girls in grades 9 through 12 were current cigar smokers, whereas a 1996 survey conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health indicated that more than 30% of the girls in 11th grade had smoked a cigar in their lifetime.³ A 1996 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation study surveying adolescents aged 14 through 19 found that 13.4% of the Black girls and 20% of the Hispanic girls had smoked a cigar in the last year.⁴

The onset of cigarette smoking by adolescents has been shown to be associated with cigarette advertising and promotion.⁵ It also has been shown that cigarette advertising campaigns targeting adult women have resulted in increased cigarette smoking initiation by adolescent girls.⁶ From this re-

search, one may assume that the promotion of cigars in women's magazines, which are also read by adolescent girls, may result in cigar smoking initiation by girls. The purpose of this study was to assess the prevalence of cigar images from 1992 through 1998 in women's magazines with the highest adolescent female readership.

Methods

Five magazines were selected for this study. The criteria for inclusion were that the magazine be published monthly, have a female readership of at least 75%, and accept tobacco advertisements. The Simmons Teenage Research Study conducted in 1998 by the Simmons Market Research Bureau, Inc.,⁷ identified *Glamour*, *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Essence* as the magazines with the highest readership

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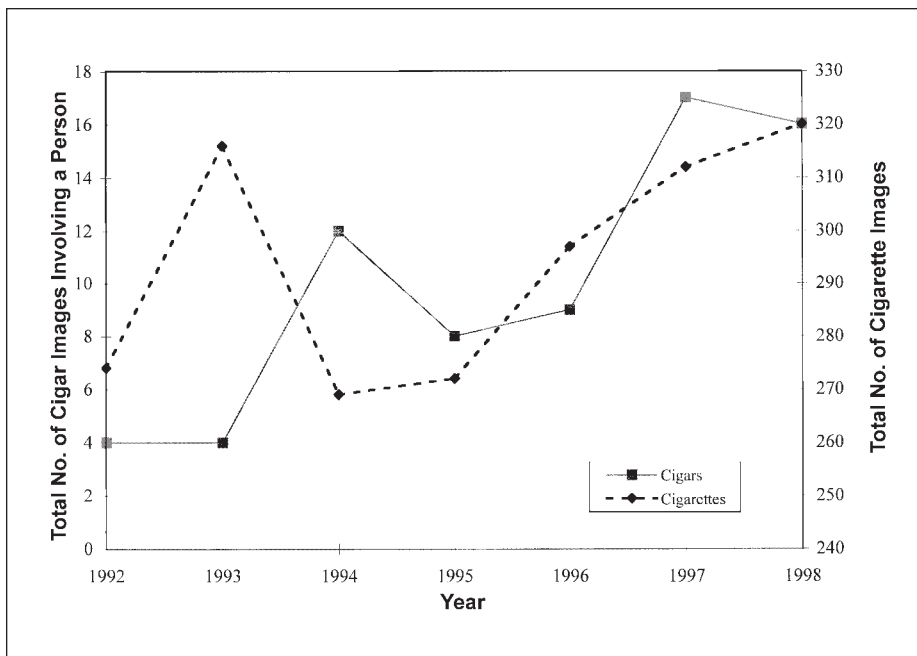


FIGURE 1—Number of cigar and cigarette images in women's magazines, 1992–1998.

among girls aged 12 through 17 that met these criteria. Although *Essence* has a female readership of only 70%, it was selected as the fifth magazine in an effort to oversample the images reaching Black girls. No magazine with a significant Hispanic readership was identified that met the criteria and had been published since 1992.

All issues of the 5 magazines for the years 1992 through 1998—a total of 414 issues—were reviewed. Six issues were unavailable (3 consecutive issues in one year for 1 magazine and 3 consecutive issues in another year for another magazine). These issues were not counted. The χ^2 test was used to determine significance.

All tobacco images observed were coded as follows:

- *Tobacco type*: cigars or cigarettes.
- *Image type*: advertisements or nonadvertisements. Advertisements were defined as any image that contained a commercial product. Nonadvertisements were defined as any images without commercial products, including candid photographs and story illustrations.
- *Product advertised with image*: either tobacco-related or not.
- *Sex of smoker*: male, female, both male and female, or other. Other included cartoon characters, advertisements with a recognizable logo but no display of the product, advertisements that showed people who were not smoking, and advertisements that showed the product without people.

Results

Cigar images increased significantly ($P < .010$) over the observation period. In 1992, only 4 cigar images appeared in the magazines reviewed. By 1998, this number had increased to 16. Of the 70 total cigar images observed, 24% appeared in 1997,

and 23% appeared in 1998. Although cigarette images vastly outnumbered cigar images, no significant increase in cigarette images occurred over this same period. Figure 1 illustrates the changing prevalence of cigar and cigarette images during the study period.

The images of women smoking cigars increased significantly ($P < .025$). In 1992, 25% of the total cigar images involving male and female smokers showed a woman cigar smoker. By 1998, women were smoking a cigar in 64% of these images. Figure 2 illustrates the number of female and male cigar smokers observed in each year. Cigar smokers included celebrities such as Vanessa Williams, Sharon Stone, Hugh Grant, Brooke Shields, and Michael Jordan. Only 7% of the cigar images involved no person smoking.

In the magazines reviewed, 70% of all cigar images appeared as nonadvertisements. Of the 21 advertisements involving a cigar, 20 were for nontobacco products. Conversely, 91% of the cigarette images appeared as advertisements, and 97% of these were advertisements for tobacco products. Cigarettes were rarely used to sell nontobacco products.

Discussion

This study had 2 limitations. In addition to the 6 missing issues, the magazines reviewed were not all complete. On average,

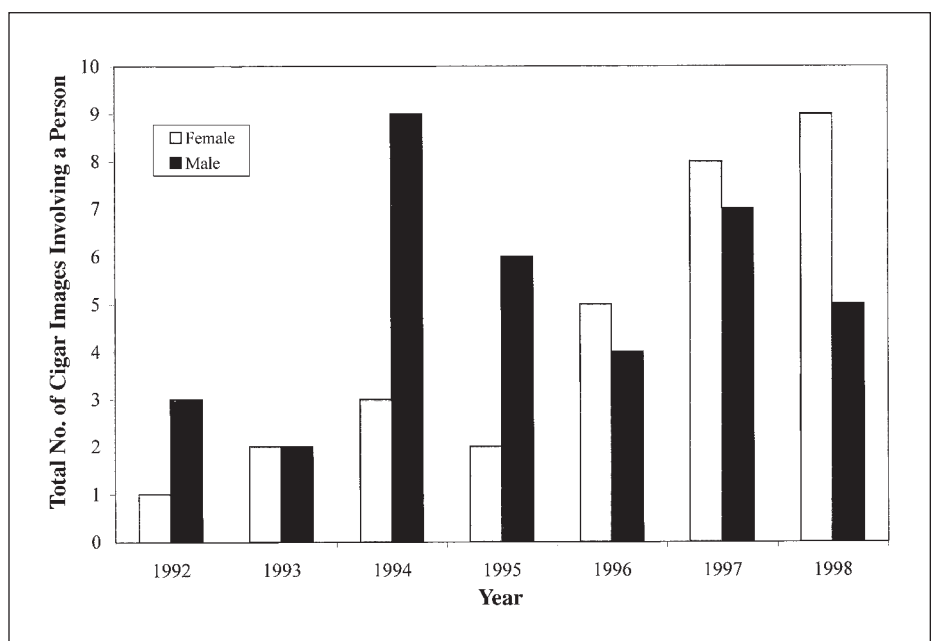


FIGURE 2—Cigar images, by sex of smoker, in women's magazines, 1992–1998.

approximately a quarter of the magazines were missing between 1 and 3 pages.

Even with these limitations, however, the study yielded several important findings. First, the appearance of cigar images in women's magazines and the portrayal of women cigar smokers increased significantly over the 7 years reviewed. Second, unlike cigarette images, most cigar images are not linked to a commercial product, which suggests that their promotion did not require direct advertising. Finally, the images that are displayed often feature well-known people who are admired by adolescents.

The focus of this study was cigar images, but the tremendous number of cigarette advertisements observed (N=2060) must be acknowledged. Although adolescent readers of women's magazines were increasingly likely to see a cigar image between 1992 and 1998, during this period these readers were bombarded with cigarette advertisements.

Several issues demand further research, including the health effects of occasional cigar smoking on youths, the health implications of cigar smoking for females, the relation between cigar smoking and cigarette smoking among adolescents, and the influence of the media on cigar smoking initiation.

As long as cigar smoking is promoted in popular culture as a desirable activity for successful and influential adults, it will appeal to adolescents. A strategy to counter this must be developed and implemented. □

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