

BOOKS

Book reviews and books of interest to "Tobacco Control" should be sent to the editor at the address given on the inside front cover.

A window into the smoker's world

X20: a novel of (not) smoking. Richard Beard. New York: Avon Books, 1996, ISBN 0-380-73194-0.

As a recent arrival to the United States from Australia, a visit to one of its famous bookstores seemed in order. I had only stepped through the door when I spied Beard's novel, which, although published in 1996, hadn't come across my desk before. I was glad I bought it. For all you non-smokers out there (including me), this book gives a very convincing impression of what we might imagine the superlative pleasures of smoking to be, and the agony of giving up this nagging addiction for good.

The book has 20 chapters, one for each cigarette in a pack, and Beard portrays a series of vignettes—sometimes amusing, sometimes painful, and occasionally bizarre—by which the main character Gregory Simpson makes the journey from being a committed compulsive smoker (the word "precontemplator" doesn't begin to describe how he thinks about his smoking) to expelling cigarettes from his life.

This novel gives substance to the word "addiction"—Beard's description of the incessant aching longing for a cigarette, the utter deprivation and desolation of doing without one's lifeblood, is a fascinating window into the smoker's world. Gregory's perverse logic—perhaps a hallmark of all smokers trying to rationalise their deadly habit—is a feature of the story and in parts, becomes ridiculously funny. For example, by way of justifying his addiction, in one of his countless obsessive monologues about how

endemic tobacco has become in society at large, he constructs a whimsical list of interesting "facts"—"Economics: Karl Marx spent more money on cigars whilst writing *Das Kapital* than he earned from its publication. This might explain his strange blindness to the obvious truth that in fact tobacco is the opium of the people. Criminology: the great Sherlock Holmes insisted that all detectives of the superior sort should be able to identify 140 different varieties of tobacco. In ash form" (page 200).

As a smoker struggling to quit, Gregory comes to the realisation that his addiction is as much a political issue as a personal one. But this novel is not for those who like a logical plot—Beard's flights of fancy make this read a changeable and challenging one, much like the nature of the substance itself. At the end of the novel, I was left with a strange sense of dissatisfaction, as though the story was left unfinished—and of course for many smokers, this is exactly the situation they experience—have they given up for good?

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Forbidden pleasures

Signs of pleasure, danger and warning. Merja Salo. Helsinki, Finland: University of Art and Design, ISBN 951-558-008-0 (CD-ROM).

This is a CD-ROM, not a book, and has grown out of a doctoral dissertation in photography. It is a detailed discussion of cigarette advertising in Finland, giving an analysis of a large universe of 2764 Finnish print advertisements from 1870 to 1994, and 379 anti-smoking advertisements of more recent dates, drawn from various Finnish archives, museums, and trade sources. The innovative CD-ROM mode was chosen "to give readers the opportunity to detach themselves from a linear manner of reading" and the ability to readily browse among the 550 colour illustrations.

With a primary focus on the import of the images used, the result is an outline of the "symbolic spheres" used in advertising for and against cigarette use. Grounded in the European intellectual traditions, it relies primarily on the sometimes obscure paradigm of semiotics—exponents are, for example, Jean Baudrillard, Charles Peirce, AJ Greimas, Raymond Williams, and Roland Barthes. The result is a richly illustrated discussion that is far more qualitative than quantitative, although there are some frequency tables.

The total time span is broken down into three phases: 1870–1942, with 1032 images from this "era of innocent pleasure"; 1949–1978, with 1103 images from this "era of dangerous pleasure"; and 1978–1994, an "era of forbidden pleasure", with a more scant 165 images. In each phase, the images are analysed in terms of five dimensions: production (manufacture); product image; consumers; situations; and referential images. Like other studies, this maps the evolution of cigarette advertising images away from the product toward images of consumers and brand iconography—with odd and interest-

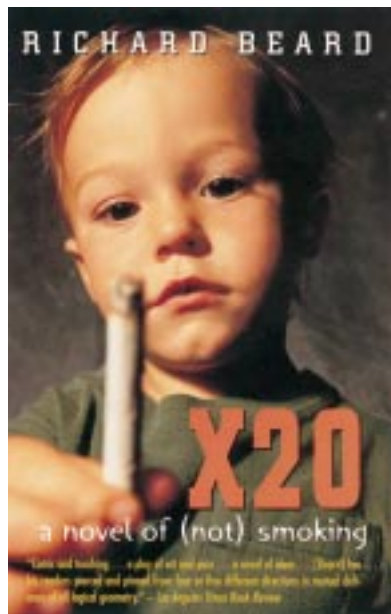
ing specifics, such as the disappearance of smoke and ashes from advertising imagery.

As Finland has been relatively persistent in its regulatory and legal efforts to curtail cigarette promotion since its 1978 Tobacco Act, this study is particularly helpful for its display of the many ways and means used by the industry to circumvent the intent of such legislation, such as indirect advertising through sponsorships, and the persistent use of brand logos, symbols, and fictive characters, such as the Marlboro cowboy, in advertising not merchandising cigarettes directly, but associated events—for example, races, clothing stores, travel agencies, and night clubs. This resource is also valuable for its comparisons of cigarette advertising with that attempting to promote non-smoking. The methods of this latter counter-propaganda include exaggeration, metaphoric variation, caricature, and salvation stories.

The CD-ROM is quite easy to navigate, with major sections, each with pull-down menus, appearing on the main screens. These sections are theory/method, history, advertising, health education, comparison, results, and tables of contents, references and illustrations. Within any historical time period, additional menu bars allow ready access to the analysis of image categories—consumers, situations, etc. In addition, the text and tables of contents are rich with various hypertext links. This allows the reader/viewer to instantly look at any of the 550 cited illustration, or see complete citations for referenced authors. Hypertext links also provide cross references and easy access to other sections of text.

Technically this is superbly well done. The text and instructions in English are well translated and easy to understand. The CD-ROM includes a five-minute animated introduction narrated in English. Despite a disclaimer that it was developed on Macintosh systems, and would be "coarser" when viewed in Windows 95, I had no such experience and had no difficulty loading and running the CD-ROM. I was less than entranced with the sound track and effects, repetitive when dwelling in any section, making me thankful for the volume control. Response times were excellent, and the entire package, including package inserts, is handsomely produced.

All in all, interesting for its substantive content and innovative mode of presentation.



A resource that can be browsed repeatedly with an unique experience every time. Comments and queries can be directed to the author's email address: msalo@uiah.fi.

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Adolescent images and identities

Smoking in adolescence: images and identities. Barbara Lloyd, Kevin Lucas, Janet Holland, Sheena McGrellis, Sean Arnold. London: Routledge, 1998, ISBN 0-415-17859-2, pp 232.

As a mother of two streetwise teenage daughters and as a committed tobacco control campaigner, I was excited at the prospect of reading this book. In the cover notes it beckons: "What factors influence adolescents to take up smoking? Why do more girls smoke than boys? In contrast to medical orthodoxy, *Smoking in Adolescence* looks at smoking from adolescents' own point of view." It adds that it will be of practical interest to teachers, youth workers, health professionals, and parents, as well as students of psychology. In fact a lot of the book is written in the sort of "lingo" used only by the last of these and is not exactly light reading for the parents and youth workers, let alone health professionals. There are some absolutely thrilling bits in it and I am really glad I read it. It has given me lots of food for thought, although it was hard going some of the time; rather like watching a very intense foreign film that has hard to read subtitles—you know you would enjoy it more if you could understand better what was going on. The first part of the book is the most impenetrable and could seriously put off the "lighter" reader. Here is a sample: "Results of their hierarchical confirmatory factor analyses indicate that the convergent and discriminant validity of the behaviour constructs was high and that method effects were low. By contrast a two factor, second order model which represented general drug use and other problem behaviours accounted for a larger proportion of variance in the lower-order factors compared with the traditional single factor model."

But it is not all like that—the best is saved until last. The last two chapters, "Interven-

tions" and "Breaking the mould", are inspiring and packed with key information. Suddenly all is revealed, clearly and succinctly. These two chapters not only summarise the rest of the book's contents but also explain how the findings can be applied practically to smoking education programmes—perhaps the best way to read the book would be to start with the last two chapters then visit and revisit the chapters and sections that you want to explore in depth.

The first chapter of the book looks at theories of risk and problem behaviour, and was the one I could not get to grips with. The next chapter is a review of what is known about adolescent smoking—each chapter is headed by an apt quotation, my favourite being: "A drug is neither moral nor immoral—it's a chemical compound. The compound itself is not a menace to society until a human being treats it as if consumption bestowed a temporary licence to act like an asshole." (Frank Zappa.)

Young people are grouped into five distinct smoking behaviour categories: never smokers; recent experimenter; old experimenter; regular light smoker; and daily smoker. Each is described in detail, and a brief resumé given of factors affecting adolescent smoking behaviour, which provides a useful guide to existing research.

The real purpose of the book is to present the findings of two empirical British studies which investigated the meaning of smoking to adolescents themselves. Both used quantitative and qualitative components and aimed at identifying factors that could prevent the uptake of smoking. The Sussex study set out to look at the construction of social identities about smoking and non-smoking, and to suggest interventions to reduce the number of adolescents (particularly girls) who smoke. A huge amount of detail is given on the methodology and prevalence results—then came the depressing results. The biggest predictor of children becoming smokers is parental breakup. Even worse is when the lone parent lives with a new partner. As a co-habiting single mum who desperately wants her daughters not to smoke, this finding really hit hard!

Subsequent chapters report back on the detailed findings of the impact of social environments on smoking, smoking and mood, smoking and image, and social identities of adolescent smokers.

Copious quotes give a very detailed and honest picture of adolescents' thoughts about smoking. For example, a regular smoker's

account of her first cigarette: "But she's very persistent and she goes, 'Oh Ellen, have one'; I went, 'No' and she went 'Have one! Go on!' and I went 'Oh alright.'"

The insight given by some of these interviews and findings have real significance for anyone involved in schools projects and other health education interventions.

Some of the messages that stood out for me in the book were:

- Children do know a lot about the health effects of smoking.
- Children from one-parent and step-families are far more likely to smoke.
- Family set up is crucial and needs to be acknowledged in health education programmes.
- Body image concerns are not important in the initiation of smoking for girls and young women—contrary to popular belief.
- Smokers are seen by smokers and non-smokers to be more sociable, fun loving, party animals who are attractive to the opposite sex.
- Non-smokers saw themselves as more mature than smokers but smokers rated themselves as more mature. Non-smokers defined maturity as personal responsibility and academic work but smokers saw maturity in terms of an adult social life—drink, parties, and popularity with the opposite sex!

Some of the social pressures to smoke or not operating within groups of young people are powerfully described. The message that most got to me is the challenge to tobacco control workers to come up with a way of shifting the universally held attributes of "fun loving", "popular", and "sociable" from smokers to non-smokers. Non-smokers are just too "sensible".

This book is a mine of interesting findings and comments and provides some useful summaries of research. It is very detailed, and hard work to read but overall I would recommend it as essential reading for anyone wanting to tackle adolescent smoking. It takes a fresh approach and presents many of the contradictions and complexities of why young people continue to smoke in such large numbers.

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