

# The cigar as a drug delivery device: youth use of blunts

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## ABSTRACT

**Aims** Blunts are hollowed-out cigars used to smoke marijuana (and perhaps other substances) in the United States. We investigated rates of blunt use; whether cigar use reported in surveys may actually be blunt use; the relationship of blunt to cigar use; characteristics of blunt users; brands of cigars used to make blunts; and drugs added to blunts.

**Design** A school-based survey of youth, the Cigar Use Reasons Evaluation (CURE).

**Setting** Eleven schools across Massachusetts.

**Participants** A total of 5016 students in grades 7–12.

**Measurements** CURE items assessing blunt, cigar and cigarette use, brands used to make blunts, drugs added to blunts and demographics were used.

**Findings** Life-time blunt use was reported by 20.0% of the sample, with use greater among high school (25.6%) than middle school (11.4%) students, and among males (23.7%) than females (16.6%). Self-reported cigar use rates were not influenced strongly by blunt use being misreported as cigar use. In a multivariate model, blunt use was associated with male gender, higher grade in school, lower GPA, truancy, lower school attachment, not living in a two-parent family, being of 'other' race/ethnicity and current use of both cigarettes and cigars. 'Phillies' was the most popular brand of cigar for making blunts, used by 59.5% of users. 'Garcia y Vega' (18.0%) was the second most popular. Twenty-eight per cent of blunt users had added drugs other than marijuana to blunts.

**Conclusions** The use of blunts as a drug delivery device is a serious problem. Efforts to address it will require the cooperation of the tobacco control and substance abuse prevention systems.

**KEYWORDS** Adolescence, blunt, brands, cigar, drugs, drug delivery device, marijuana survey, tobacco, youth.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, public health specialists in the United States have become aware that young people have been smoking cigars in surprising numbers. Rates as high as 41.6% for life-time use of cigars by high school students have been reported (Delnevo *et al.* 2002). The rise of cigar use among young people has become a source of distress to those concerned about tobacco control: as success in reducing youth smoking of cigarettes in the United States is being partially achieved (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1999b; Massachusetts

Department of Education 2002; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2001; Johnston *et al.* 2001; Soldz *et al.* 2002), youth might continue to be exposed to tobacco through cigars and other alternative tobacco products, such as bidis (hand-rolled cigarettes imported from India) (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention 1999a; Yen *et al.* 2000) and kreteks (clove-flavored cigarettes imported from Indonesia) (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention 2000a). At the same time, those working in the substance abuse field in the United States have become aware of the phenomenon of blunting, using hollowed-out cigars as containers for

marijuana (US Department of Health and Human Services 1999; Tschirgi 1994; Community Epidemiology Work Group 2002; Action on Smoking and Health 1999; Yerger *et al.* 2001), supplemented occasionally by other substances such as cocaine, crack cocaine, PCP and heroin (Community Epidemiology Work Group 2002). The term 'blunt' arises from its use as a generic term to describe cigars that are about five inches long and 2/3 of an inch in diameter (Community Epidemiology Work Group 2002).

Blunts appear to have been popular in New York City in the early 1980s and the term blunts has been traced back to that time (Community Epidemiology Work Group 2002). Blunts rose in popularity to the extent that some criminologists have given the name 'blunt generation' or 'marijuana/blunt era' to the 1990s (Golub & Johnson 1999; Johnson *et al.* 2000). Interestingly, these authors attribute the decline in youth violence seen during the 1990s partially to the switch from cocaine and crack to marijuana and blunts as drug of choice for inner-city youth.

The popularity of blunts has been attributed to several factors, including the ease of using cigar wrappers to roll up marijuana, the greater size of the resultant blunt compared to joints (marijuana cigarettes rolled in cigarette papers) which allows them to be smoked over several sessions, and the fact that cigar wrappers are made of tobacco, a natural product (Community Epidemiology Work Group 2002). Other factors cited include a claim by some youth that smoking blunts led to a better high than did other ways of administering marijuana (Falkowski 1997), the ability of the tobacco wrapper to mask the smell of marijuana (Evaluation Oversight and Coordinating Unit 2002) and a belief that cigar wrappers burn more slowly than cigarette papers, resulting in consumption of a higher dose of marijuana (South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Services 1997).

The use of blunts is of interest to tobacco and substance abuse researchers and practitioners for both methodological and substantive reasons. Methodologically, it is possible that a significant portion of reported cigar use rates are due in fact to young people responding affirmatively to survey questions about cigar use when they are actually referring to their use of blunts. Thus, it is possible that the apparent high rates of youth cigar use might be reflecting high rates of marijuana use (Johnston *et al.* 2001; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2001). Most of the current reports on youth cigar use fail to consider this possibility and are thus open to possible misinterpretations of their findings.

Blunt use is also of concern as the rise in popularity of blunts in the United States may signal increases in the doses of marijuana received by users, based on reports that smoking blunts leads to a greater rate of smoke

inhalation than other marijuana delivery systems (Tschirgi 1994; Action on Smoking and Health 1999; Community Epidemiology Work Group 2002). There are also reports (US Department of Health and Human Services 1999; Community Epidemiology Work Group 2002) that drugs in addition to marijuana are being added to blunts, including cocaine, crack, PCP, methamphetamine and embalming fluid (Join Together 1998), raising concerns that youth sharing blunts may be exposed to other substances as well, perhaps inadvertently. Thus, it is important that the public health and substance abuse prevention communities become aware of blunts and that researchers study the use of blunts, the relationship of blunt use to cigar smoking, and the characteristics of blunt users.

Elucidation of these issues is impossible with currently available data, as virtually no information is available in the professional literature on blunts. Questions about blunts or items distinguishing cigar from blunt use have not been included on the major national surveys of youth use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Everett *et al.* 1997; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2000b), the National Household Survey of Drug Abuse (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2001), the Monitoring the Future Study (Johnston *et al.* 2001) or the National Youth Tobacco Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2001). Searches of the MEDLINE, PsychINFO, and SocioFILE databases yielded only one reference to blunts (Golub & Johnson 1999).

The authors recently conducted the Cigar Use Reasons Evaluation (CURE), a school-based survey of middle and high school students investigating youth use of alternative tobacco products: cigars, bidis and kreteks (Soldz *et al.* 2003). Because the understanding of youth use of cigars was clouded by the blunt issue, several questions regarding respondents' blunt use were included in the CURE. This paper reports on data from the CURE that clarifies several key issues regarding youth blunt use and its relationship to use of cigars. In particular, we investigated (1) rates of blunt use in our sample; (2) the overlap between blunt and cigar use, including whether reported youth cigar use on surveys is primarily an artifact of blunt use; (3) the characteristics of blunt users; (4) the cigar brands used by youth for constructing blunts; and (5) the extent to which drugs in addition to nicotine and marijuana are being added to blunts by youth.

## METHODS

### Participants

Participants comprised 5016 7th–12th graders from 12 schools in Massachusetts that participated in the CURE

study during spring and fall, 2001. The schools included two that were exclusively middle school (grades 7 and 8), three that were exclusively high schools (grades 9–12) and seven that combined middle and high school students. While the sample was a convenience sample, the schools were spread across Massachusetts and were from communities that were broadly representative of the state, spanning the spectrum approximately equally in terms of type of community (urban, suburban, rural) and state rankings on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Test (MCAS), the state's required standardized achievement test. For the six schools where we had exact classroom enrollment data, response rates of usable surveys averaged 83.5% (range: 74.9–97.8%).

The 5016 participants were 48.9% male, 81.2% white (not Hispanic), 2.1% black (not Hispanic), 8.4% Hispanic, 3.7% Asian/Pacific Islander and 4.7% other race/ethnicity. More were in grades 8 (23.2%) and 9 (23.5%), and fewer in grades 7 (16.4%) and 12 (8.1%) than would be expected.

### Cure

As the CURE was designed partly to distinguish use of cigars for blunting from the smoking of cigars as manufactured, several devices were utilized to make this distinction. Early in the CURE, there is a single item: 'Have you ever smoked a cigar, cigarillo, or little cigar?' (ever smoked cigar) that was modeled on life-time cigarette questions used in such surveys as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention 2001, 2000b). This item was followed by questions about life-time, current and age of first use for alcohol and marijuana. The section of blunt questions was next, followed by a cigar section that began with instructions to distinguish cigars from blunts: 'The next questions ask about CIGAR use. THEY DO NOT INCLUDE BLUNTS' (emphases in original); other questions in this section included directions not to include blunts when reporting on cigar use. These devices were developed with feedback from several youth focus groups, in which the issue of distinguishing cigars from blunts was discussed in detail.

From the CURE, variables assessing life-time and current use of blunts and cigars and of current cigarette use were derived from items asking about the number of days of use of each substance over the respondent's life-time and in the last 30 days; any response other than 0 days was considered use. Other variables assessed the brands of cigars usually used for blunting and other drugs used as additives to blunts. Also used were background characteristics of participants, including demographics (grade, gender, type of community in which school was located and race/ethnicity); family characteristics (two-parent family, whether at least one of the parents was a

college graduate); school functioning ([attachment, and plans to attend college]), and life satisfaction (a single item).

### Data analysis

Analyses used descriptive statistics, *t*-tests and univariate and multivariate logistic regressions.

Most analyses involving rates and their comparison were conducted using survey design-based contingency table techniques (Govindarajulu 1999; Levy & Lemeshow 1999; Lohr 1999). For all reported confidence intervals (95% CIs) and significance tests, the Huber–White robust variance estimator (White 1982; Diggle *et al.* 1994) was used to correct standard errors to account for the non-independence of observations (students) within classes.

As the sample was not a true random sample we did not utilize weights in our analyses. The one exception was for calculation of rates of use, where unweighted rates were supplemented by rates calculated with weights adjusting the proportion of youths in the various grades to be equal to proportions state-wide in 1999. Presentation of weighted rates of use may facilitate comparison of our rates with those that may be reported in future studies.

The examination of the relation of blunt use to cigar use was conducted utilizing Cohen's  $\kappa$  (Cohen 1960); as we are not aware of any adjustment for non-independence of observations with this statistic, we report the traditional asymptotic standard error (Fleiss *et al.* 1969).

In order to examine youth characteristics associated with blunt use, an ordinal logistic regression (proportional odds) model (Armstrong & Sloan 1989; Ananth & Kleinbaum 1997; Hosmer & Lemeshow 2000) was estimated, where the dependent variable was a three-level ordinal variable—no blunt use, life-time (but not current) blunt use, current blunt use—and youth characteristics were the independent variables. The reasoning behind the use of this model is that past (life-time but not current) use indicates a lesser involvement with blunt use than does continued (current) use. Statistically, the use of such a model involves two assumptions, that there is a monotonic relationship between each predictor and levels of the outcome and that the odds are approximately proportional between adjacent levels of the dependent variable. Exploratory analyses showed that the monotonicity assumption was met by all predictors. Due to the large sample size, we did not use a formal statistical test of the proportional odds assumption. Rather, we compared the results from the proportional odds model to that from a multinomial logistic regression model which did not assume ordinality of the dependent variable and looked for substantively meaningful differences in regression

parameters and found none. Thus, we present here results from the simpler (many fewer parameters to be estimated and interpreted) proportional odds model.

As school-based surveys such as the CURE always have missing values, criteria were developed for handling these protocols. Because the initial primary focus of the study was youth cigar use, surveys missing responses for the life-time or current cigar use items were excluded from the dataset ( $n = 134$ ). List-wise deletion of observations with missing values was used for each analysis.

## RESULTS

### Rates of use

The overall rate of life-time blunt use in the sample was 20.0% (95% CI: 18.2–22.0%) while the rate of current (past month) use was 9.7% (95% CI: 8.6–10.9%) (Table 1). High school students had significantly higher rates of both life-time and current blunt use (life-time: 25.6%, 95% CI: 23.3–28.2%; current: 12.5%, 95% CI: 11.0–14.2%) than did middle school students (life-time: 11.4%, 95% CI: 9.6–13.6%; current: 5.4%, 95% CI: 4.3–6.8%). Also, male students were significantly more likely to use blunts (life-time: 23.7%, 95% CI: 21.3–26.2; current: 12.3%, 95% CI: 10.8–14.0%) than were female students (life-time: 16.6%, 95% CI: 14.7–18.7%; current: 7.3%, 95% CI: 6.2–8.5%). When weights matching the sample to the state's distribution of students in each grade were applied, these rates increased slightly (Table 1), with the overall life-time rate becoming 21.7% (95% CI: 19.6–23.9%) and the current rate 10.6% (95% CI: 9.3–12.1%).

### Relation of blunt use to cigar smoking

The first question to be examined is the overlap between self-reported cigar use and use of blunts, examining the possibility that a large percentage of those youths reporting cigar use on surveys may in fact be referring to use of blunts when they make an affirmative response. To clarify this issue, the reported rates of use in the single item which preceded questions about blunt use and did not distinguish cigar use from blunt use ('Have you ever smoked a cigar, cigarillo, or little cigar?') were compared to the cigar use rates reported when the question followed questions about blunts and explicitly instructed respondents to ignore blunt use (life-time cigar use).

For the 4931 people with responses to both questions, there was 95.0% agreement (Cohen's  $\kappa = 0.84$ ,  $SE = 0.01$ ). Of those reporting cigar use on the ever smoked cigar question, 82.0% (95% CI: 79.4–84.4%) reported life-time cigar use. However, of the other 181 individuals, only 43.3% (95% CI: 35.6–51.4%; 7.7% of all positive responses to the ever smoked cigar item) reported life-time blunt use.

Examination of the relationship between blunt and cigar use indicates that life-time cigar smokers were significantly more likely to use blunts (life-time: 63.1%, 95% CI: 59.6–66.5%; current: 33.7%, 95% CI: 30.3–37.3%) than were those youths who had never smoked cigars (life-time blunt use: 10.4%, 95% CI: 9.1–11.9%; current blunt use: 4.4%, 95% CI: 3.6–5.2%). Furthermore, while both life-time and current blunt users had elevated rates of cigar smoking, most were not currently smoking cigars except those used for blunts (Table 2).

**Table 1** Rates of blunt use: unweighted and weighted.

	Gender		School level	Life-time cigar use			Total %
	Male % (95% CI) (n = 2451)	Female % (95% CI) (n = 2565)	Middle % (95% CI) (n = 1985)	High % (95% CI) (n = 3031)	No % (95% CI) (n = 4101)	Yes % (95% CI) (n = 915)	
Unweighted							
Life-time blunt use	23.7 (21.3–26.2)	16.6** (14.7–18.7)	11.4 (9.6–13.6)	25.6** (23.3–28.2)	10.4 (9.1–11.9)	63.1** (59.6–66.5)	20.0 (18.2–22.0)
Current blunt use	12.3 (10.8–14.0)	7.3** (6.2–8.5)	5.4 (4.3–6.8)	12.5** (11.0–14.2)	4.4 (3.6–5.2)	33.7** (30.3–37.3)	9.7 (8.6–10.9)
Weighted							
Life-time blunt use	25.5 (22.8–28.3)	18.1** (16.0–20.4)	10.8 (9.1–12.9)	27.8** (25.2–30.5)	11.3 (9.8–13.0)	64.0** (60.3–67.5)	21.7 (19.6–23.9)
Current blunt use	13.4 (11.7–15.4)	8.0** (6.7–9.4)	5.1 (4.1–6.4)	13.7** (12.0–15.6)	4.8 (4.0–5.8)	34.5** (30.7–38.4)	10.6 (9.3–12.1)

\*\* $P < 0.01$ . Weighted rates are based on weights adjusting proportion of sample in each grade to the statewide proportion in that grade.

**Table 2** Rates of cigar smoking for life-time and current blunt users.

	n	Cigar use	
		Life-time % (95% CI)	Current % (95% CI)
Life-time blunt use			
User	999	57.5** (53.7–61.1)	21.2** (18.6–24.1)
Non-user	3987	8.4 (7.4–9.5)	2.0 (1.6–2.6)
Current blunt use			
User	483	63.4** (58.6–67.8)	31.5** (27.3–35.9)
Non-user	4492	13.4 (12.0–14.9)	3.1 (2.5–3.7)

\*\**P* < 0.01.

### Characteristics of blunt users

In an ordinal logistic regression model, blunt use status was associated significantly with male gender, higher grade in school, lower GPA, truancy, lower school attachment, not living in a two-parent family, being of 'other' race/ethnicity, and current use of both cigarettes and cigars (Table 3).

### Brands

We also examined which brands of cigars were likely to be used for making blunts. By far the most popular brand used for making blunts was Phillies, at 59.4% of blunt users (95% CI: 56.0–62.7%), followed by Garcia y Vega at 18.0% (95% CI: 15.3–21.0%), Dutch Masters 8.4% (95% CI: 6.5–10.8%), Black & Mild at 5.4% (95% CI: 3.9–7.4%) and non-listed brands used by 9.8% (95% CI: 8.0–12.0%) of blunt users. Further analyses examined whether brand preference varied by gender, middle or high school status, and white/minority status (due to the small cell sizes for non-white groups, these had to be merged into one category). The gender analysis showed that male blunt smokers were significantly more likely than female users to use four brands: Phillies (male 63.1%, 95% CI: 58.5–67.5%; female 54.5%, 95% CI: 49.2–59.7%) Garcia y Vega (male 24.0%, 95% CI: 20.1–28.3%; female 10.2%, 95% CI: 7.4–13.9%), White Owl (male 5.9%, 95% CI: 4.2–8.3%; female 3.0%, 95% CI: 1.7–5.1%), and Swisher Sweets (male 3.8%, 95% CI: 2.4–5.9%; female 1.2%, 95% CI: 0.5–2.9%), while females were significantly more likely to use non-listed brands (male 7.2%, 95% CI: 5.2–10.1%; female 13.1%, 95% CI: 10.1–16.8%) to make blunts. Middle school blunt users were significantly more likely to use Black & Mild (middle school 9.4%, 95% CI: 6.1–14.3%; high

**Table 3** Ordinal logistic regression of blunt use on youth characteristics.

	Blunt use OR (95% CI) (n = 4436)
Gender	0.61**** (0.50–1.37)
Grade	1.40**** (1.30–1.49)
Race/ethnicity	11.26*
White	—
Black	0.71 (0.39–1.29)
Hispanic	1.41 (1.00–1.98)
Asian	0.82 (0.44–1.52)
Other race	1.62* (1.10–2.39)
Community type	0.23
Urban	—
Suburban	0.95 (0.76–1.18)
Rural	0.99 (1.33–1.29)
Two-parent family	0.66**** (0.53–1.21)
Parents' education	0.96 (0.88–1.04)
GPA	0.67**** (0.60–0.75)
College planned	0.95 (0.75–1.20)
Truancy	2.67**** (2.25–3.18)
School attachment	0.83**** (0.76–0.92)
Life satisfaction	0.98 (0.90–1.06)
Current cigar use	4.21**** (3.03–5.86)
Current cigarette use	6.17**** (5.02–7.57)
Overall Wald $\chi^2$	974.74****

\**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\*\**P* < 0.001. Statistics for race/ethnicity and community type are Wald  $\chi^2$  with 3 and 2 d.f., respectively, assessing an overall relationship to blunt use. Dependent variable is three-level blunt use (none, life-time, current).

school 4.1%, 95% CI: 2.6–6.4%), Danneman (middle school 2.7%, 95% CI: 1.3–5.6%; high school 0.4%, 95% CI: 0.1–1.3%) and Robert Burns (middle school 1.3%, 95% CI: 0.4–4.1%; and high school 0.1%, 95% CI: 0.0–1.0%), although the latter two brands were used by very few students in either level. High school blunt users were significantly more likely than those in middle school to use Garcia y Vega (middle school 13.0%, 95% CI: 8.8–18.8%; high school 19.6%, 95% CI: 16.4–23.2%). Three brands were more popular among minority blunt users—Black & Mild (non-white 10.0%, 95% CI: 6.5–15.1%; white 3.6%, 95% CI: 2.5–5.3%), Black Dutchess (non-white 5.5%, 95% CI: 3.1–9.7%; white 2.5%, 95% CI: 1.6–4.0%) and Robert Burns (non-white 2.0%, 95% CI: 0.8–5.2%; white 0.0%)—while white blunt users were significantly more likely to use non-listed brands (non-white 5.0%, 95% CI: 2.7–9.0%; white 10.8%, 95% CI: 8.7–13.5%).

### Substances added to blunts

The final issue to be examined regarding blunt use is an exploration of the addition of drugs to the tobacco and

**Table 4** Drugs other than marijuana added to blunts by blunt users.

	Gender		
	Male % (95% CI) (n = 596)	Female % (95% CI) (n = 451)	Total % (95% CI) (n = 1047)
Cocaine	13.3 (10.4–16.8)	8.9 (6.3–12.3)	11.4 (9.4–13.7)
Ecstasy (MDMA)	9.1 (6.9–11.9)	8.4 (6.1–11.6)	8.8 (7.0–11.0)
Heroin	4.5 (2.9–6.9)	2.9 (1.7–4.8)	3.8 (2.8–5.3)
LSD	7.4 (5.5–9.9)	5.8 (3.7–8.8)	6.7 (5.2–8.6)
Mushrooms	11.7 (9.1–15.0)	7.8* (5.6–10.6)	10.0 (8.2–12.2)
PCP	8.2 (6.1–11.0)	7.8 (5.6–10.7)	8.0 (6.4–10.0)
Peyote	2.3 (1.3–4.1)	0.9 (0.3–2.3)	1.7 (1.1–2.8)
Other	8.7 (6.5–11.5)	5.1* (3.5–7.4)	7.2 (5.6–9.1)
Any additive	30.7 (26.7–35.0)	24.8 (20.7–29.5)	28.2 (25.2–31.3)

\* $P < 0.05$ .

marijuana in blunts (Table 4). Twenty-eight per cent (95% CI: 25.2–31.3%) of blunt users reported having added at least one substance to blunts. Substances added by at least 5% of blunt users were cocaine (used by 11.4% of blunt users, 95% CI: 9.4–13.7%), mushrooms (10.0%, 95% CI: 8.2–12.2%), ecstasy or MDMA (8.8%, 95% CI: 7.0–11.0%), PCP (8.0%, 95% CI: 6.4–10.0%), LSD (6.7%, 95% CI: 5.2–8.6%) and other substances (7.2%, 95% CI: 5.6–9.1%).

## DISCUSSION

In interpreting the findings of this study, certain limitations of the study should be kept in mind. First, participants were from a convenience sample in one state in the United States; thus, results may not generalize to other countries or states in the United States and may not be entirely representative even of Massachusetts' students. Further, the data were self-reported by students, and we had no way of confirming responses.

Several aspects of youth blunt use, both methodological and substantive, were explored. As to the methodological issue, the study provides strong evidence that self-reported youth cigar use is real and not simply an artifact of blunt use being reported as cigar smoking. Our results suggest that many youth do make a distinction between

use of cigars and of blunts. These results are in contrast to a focus group study of African American youth that suggested that the youth did not make this distinction (Yerger *et al.* 2001). There may be cultural differences at work here which deserve future examination. The sample of black youths in the current study is too small to allow examination of the blunt–cigar relationship only for this subsample.

The present results further suggest that eliminating such reporting errors would reduce reported cigar prevalence rates by less than 10%, emphasizing that youth cigar use is a real phenomenon and not a reporting artifact. Nonetheless, the possibility of confusion between blunt and cigar use suggests that those conducting youth prevalence surveys should make a greater effort to clarify the distinction for respondents. Our results indicate further that blunt and cigar use are far from identical. While cigar smokers have elevated blunt use and vice versa, the majority of blunt users are not currently smoking cigars. Thus, blunt and cigar use are related but, nonetheless, separate public health problems.

Overall life-time blunt use was 20.0% in our sample, with current use about half that. Further, rates were higher among males than females and high school students than middle school students. In fact, among male high school students the rate of blunt use was 30.8%, nearly a third of these students. Blunts are therefore not a trivial phenomenon. Examination of the characteristics of blunt users indicates that they are similar to adolescent users of other substances (Abdelrahman *et al.* 1998; Najaka *et al.* 2001; Soldz & Cui 2001). Blunt users are more likely to have poor school functioning and less likely to live in two-parent families. They are also more likely to be current users of cigarettes and cigars. This is in contradistinction to cigar users in the same sample, who were more likely than other youth to come from families with higher levels of parental education. Blunt users, like cigar users, and unlike cigarette smokers in the CURE sample, were more likely to be male.

Results on cigar brand use showed that one brand, Phillies, was preferred overwhelmingly for making blunts among youth blunt users. While Phillies was also the most commonly used brand among youth cigar users (Soldz *et al.* in press), the 59.4% of blunt users preferring Phillies for making blunts was almost twice the 30.8% rate of Phillies use for smoking cigars. Phillies makes numerous distinct cigar products, including one called Phillies Blunts. In focus groups conducted during the design of the CURE study, the term blunt was considered virtually synonymous with use of Phillies Blunts cigars for making blunts by many youth, despite the existence of a number of other brands that make blunt cigars (Joe-Smoke.Net, 2002). In attempting to explain the reason that Phillies are so popular for making blunts, a comment

on blunts available at many websites states 'users say that the Phillies Blunt brand produces less harsh-tasting or sweeter smoke. The leaf wrapper of a Phillies Blunt is strong enough to hold together through the manipulations of making a blunt. Other brands fall apart' (Tschirgi 1994). In addition to these purported advantages of Phillies Blunts, it is possible that Phillies are being in some way marketed implicitly toward youth for this purpose. There are claims, for example, that the increase in market share of Phillies brand cigars in the early 1990s was due largely to their use for blunting (Community Epidemiology Work Group 2002). Tobacco control and substance abuse policy professionals need to consider this possibility seriously.

A further issue surrounding blunt use is the addition of other drugs to blunts. Our results suggest that virtually any recreational drug available will be added to blunts by at least some youth, even if smoking it does not necessarily enhance the effect of the drug. In fact, more than a quarter of all blunt users reported having added at least one substance to blunts, with the most common substances being cocaine, mushrooms, MDMA, PCP and LSD. Our study provided no data as to the frequency with which such substances are being added. Future studies should explore whether adding drugs to blunts is a frequent or infrequent occurrence and what health consequences flow from smoking various drugs in this way.

The common use of cigars as drug delivery devices for marijuana and other drugs in addition to the traditional nicotine (National Cancer Institute 1998), indicates that control of cigars and blunts will require the cooperation of various government and private sector systems. Typically, cigars would be dealt with by tobacco control specialists, while marijuana and other drug use would be under the purview of the substance abuse prevention and treatment systems. Unfortunately, youth today seem to be ignoring these jurisdictional divisions. Due to the changing face of substance use among youth, it will be important to cooperate across these jurisdictional boundaries in order to increase public awareness and prevent the spread of this problem. It is possible, for example, that attempts to restrict youth access to tobacco products may lead to reductions in blunt use, and might impact methods of administration of marijuana and other drugs as well. Policy-makers should be alert to such potential changes. Policy-makers and researchers also should examine the marketing strategies of those companies manufacturing cigars utilized for blunt use, both to explore whether these products are being deliberately marketed toward youth or to particular subgroups of youth and whether their potential for making blunts is subtly emphasized, for instance through product placement with music performers or in MTV shows. Researchers need to examine the addictive potential of the nicotine

inhaled when blunts are smoked and the risks of inhaling multiple substances when other drugs are added to blunts; and prevention and treatment providers need to be aware of the multiple uses of cigars as they design and conduct intervention programs. Perhaps addressing youth blunt and cigar use will provide the needed impetus for better collaboration between the tobacco control and substance abuse systems in the United States. At the same time, policy-makers and researchers in other countries, especially those with high rates of either marijuana or cigar use, should be on the alert for the possible development of blunts as part of the tobacco and drug-use phenomenon.

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