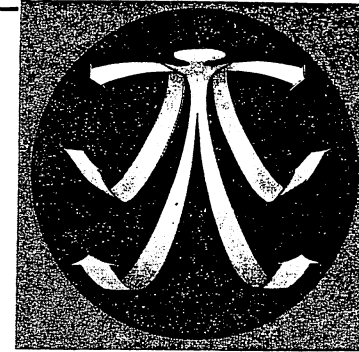

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Contributors

Rosalie H. Wax is Professor of Anthropology and Sociology, and Murray L. Wax is Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, at Washington University, St. Louis. The present essay is the outgrowth of a continued interest on her part, in which she has been exploring not only how people stop smoking but how they start and what leads them then to continue smoking. She is the author of *Doing Fieldwork: Warnings and Advice* (University of Chicago Press), which includes case materials based on her fieldwork in American Indian communities and in the Relocation Centers where the Japanese-American were confined during World War II. Murray L. Wax has written several books on contemporary Indian affairs. Currently, he is the Principal Investigator for a project funded by NSF on "Ethical Problems of Fieldwork" and he is also working with NIE on ethnographic studies of desegregated schools.

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HOW PEOPLE STOP SMOKING: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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What happens as people successfully attempt to quit smoking is analyzed with the aid of data from a pilot survey of thirty ex-smokers supplemented by other types of materials. It becomes apparent that stopping smoking was, for most of the respondents, a private and individual process involving conscious self-direction and self-manipulation. From this process the individual emerged as a new person who (1) has completely lost interest in smoking or (2) knows that he will never smoke again.

If the essence of *addiction* is the difficulty, or inability, of the consumer to discontinue his usage of the drug, then tobacco is surely among the most addictive of practices. The typical smoker can narrate a number of attempts to quit (Sencer, 1976:45), and even some attempts that seemed to be successful for days, weeks, or even months, only to be followed by relapse and a continuation of the practice that is then sustained at a level as high or higher than initially (Brecher, 1972:214-215, 220-228; Hunt and Matarazzo, 1970:76). Under the circumstances it is noteworthy that a significant proportion of smokers do manage to quit, but it is regrettable that there have been so few studies of how these fortunate individuals managed to liberate themselves, for this would add, not only to our knowledge of how to assist others in quitting smoking, but also to an understanding of the mechanisms of human addiction (Schwartz and Dubitzky, 1968; Tamerin and Eisinger, 1972).

Perhaps because smoking tobacco does not seem to offer much intrinsic satisfaction, much traditional inquiry has focused on *why* people smoke. But the theories which claim to answer "Why?" do not seem to assist those who would not desist.