Research Progress Report: Fragrance Use in India

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[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/15555/gender/v01/GCB-01

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INTRODUCTION

Smell is the most direct of our senses (Ackerman 1990). It can stimulate the limbic system that serves as the central circuit for emotion, mood, motivation, and sexual behavior (Mensing and Beck 1988). Only about 10% of taste is taste; most of what we taste actually comes from smell (Lew 1989).

Approximately 4 million people in the U.S. suffer from smell and taste disorders. Anosmia, the inability to smell, and hyposmia, reduced ability to smell are the most common smell disorders. The inability to smell or taste may be an inconvenience, but recent studies show it also can signal early stages of depression, breast cancer, hypothyroidism, Turner’s syndrome, Parkinson’s disease, or Alzheimer’s disease (American Medical News 1989). Ageing ultimately impairs the ability to smell (Cain Eskenazi and Friend 1986).

Dr. Alan R. Hirsch, Director of Chicago’s Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation conducted a study in which he reported an interesting difference in the brain function of chefs as compared with that of the general population, which he referred to as “novice smellers.” The public perceives the sense of smell in the right side of the brain, which is associated with the appreciation of music and art. The professional chefs, however, identify smell and taste in the brain’s left side, which is associated with language, mathematics, and logic (The Daily Democrat 1989). Dr. Hirsch has also observed that women have a better sense of smell than men (Press-Enterprise 1989).

The literal meaning of perfume is “through smoke.” Perfume was first used in Mesopotamia as incense offered to the gods (Ackerman 1990). The early civilizations burned the resinous gum from desert plants such as myrrh and frankincense and smelled the aromatic smoke (Gibbons 1986). The Romans borrowed perfumery and the bath from the Egyptians and combined scent and sensuality with extravagance. In the pre-Greek culture of Crete, athletes used aromatic oils to anoint themselves before the games (Ackerman 1990). The ancient Greeks were intelligent perfumers, and knew the secrets of extracting and blending flower, fruit, and root fragrances from their area and from India and Arabia (McLaughlin 1972). With the rise of Christianity, the use of perfumes stopped due to a devotion to restraint and a wish not to be seen as self-indulgent (Gibbons 1986). By Renaissance times, the previous perception of perfume as a way to power and seductiveness had been forgotten. Perfume was then used chiefly for masking unpleasant odors (Norcy 1988).

Aromatherapy, the therapeutic use of aromatic plants and oils made from them, dates from earliest times. In Egypt, for both spiritual and medicinal uses, infused oils and lotions were used 5000 years ago. In early civilizations, aromatic herbs and woods were burned to drive out evil spirits. In many parts of the world, fragrant plants have been, and still are, an integral part of the ritual involved in sorcery, healing, and other religious practices (Tisserand 1988). According to Tisserand (1988), essential oils can be used to influence mood in four different ways:

1. To evoke positive feelings (e.g., clarity or vivacity);
2. To counter negative feelings (e.g., anger or depression);

3. To influence our own mood;

4. To influence the mood of others (pp. 179-180).

All smells fall into a few basic categories: minty (peppermint), floral (roses), ethereal (pears), musky (musk), resinous (camphor), foul (rotten eggs), and acrid (vinegar) (Ackerman, 1990). However, some 17,000 odors have now been distinguished, some good, and some bad; and a system has recently been developed by chemist Septimuss Piesse, by which the intensity of a particular scent is equated with a note on the musical scale (Cavendish 1970).

People differ in their perception of an odor. Perfumers say that Germans and Brazilians like pines-fresh notes. The French, with more 'sophisticated' perfumes, prefer exotic, warm flowery notes like jasmine. Japanese fragrances are delicate, fine, and much less obvious than they tend to be in the U.S. (Gibbons 1986). Baron conducted a study on the impact of perfumes on first impressions; the results suggest that the use of scent can indeed affect the impressions users make on others. However, the effect may not be always positive (Baron 1988). Special individual experiences will play a role, so that an odor that is liked by most may be extremely unpleasant to an individual who has had different experiences (Engen 1988). Thus, the various experiences of people from different social, cultural, economic, and geographical backgrounds result in differing patterns of association (Byrne-Quinn 1988). In their research on odor recognition, Rabin and Cain (1984) described the process of odor recognition:

"A familiar odor connects with existing information in memory and as a result of interacting with that information, may leave a very discriminable memory trace. The degree to which an odor connects with experience, as indexed by rated familiarity or label quality semantic index-appears to be directly related to subsequent recognition performance" (p. 325).

Sounds, smells, and sometimes tastes, are remembered longer than visible objects, and remind us about events and people associated with them (Hazlitt 1931). Individuals associated smells strongly with particular people. In a Japanese study, for example, a woman talked about the smell of her mother's hands:

"I remember the warm, wistful fragrances of my childhood like the smell of my mother's hands after she had cut the children's hair" (Byrne-Quinn 1988,205).

The associated fragrances are not necessarily expensive perfumes, but, rather, are odors attendant upon everyday life.

Fragrances are used widely in our lives. Though use of perfumes is not essential in our everyday household products, most of them contain at least a small amount of fragrance (Ackerman 1990). The widespread use of perfumes may be attributed to the culturally-induced positive thoughts and self-confidence a user feels with the use of perfumes. Byrne-Quinn (1988) considers perfumes as:

"Messengers that give the user confidence in obtaining a certain level of gratification, social or biological-psychological. In a social setting a person may be setting out to reinforce his/her position in a reference group, may be seeking maintenance of position among peers; or may be trying for acceptance in a group he or she aspires to" (p. 206).

Perfumes are products which possess numerous intangible properties. Norcy (1988) describes the problems faced in selling perfume:

"Everything that is presented to the user--the shape and coloring of the package, the design and form of the bottle, and the precious contents--are symbols. At least in some cases, the color and form of the presentation may influence the sale more than the smell of the perfume" (p. 220).

The color of a perfume also portrays its image and plays an important role in stimulating the emotions of the user (Banashek 1989).

Besides the fragrances used on the body, fragrances in the environment can affect people. A study by the Monnell Chemical Sense Center in Philadelphia found that certain smells, in this case, a fruity, floral scent-can actually influence shoppers' behavior; this may be considered to be another form of subliminal advertising or
As indicated above, for centuries people have sought to surround themselves with pleasing aromas (Ackerman 1990; Gibbons 1986; McLaughlin 1972; Tisserand 1988). The preliminary study presented here focuses on the use and meaning of fragrances as interpreted by women from India. The underlying assumption is that fragrance use and meaning vary across cultures (Gibbons 1986). In this study of the usage of fragrance, in-depth interviews were conducted with six women from India, in their homes. Since the interviewees were personal friends of the interviewer, a rapport was immediately established during the interviews but is also a source of bias in the research.

Scope and Method

All the interviewees were women aged 26 to 42, who lived in campus housing at a major Western university. All the interviewees belonged to the Hindu religion and were from Central, Northern, and Eastern India. Although everyone was involved with the university in some way, the financial situations of the interviewees varied considerably according to family size, occupation, and the number of working people in the household.

The interview started with a discussion of general topics for about 10-15 minutes to make the interviewees feel comfortable and at ease. General, then specific questions about their fragrance use followed. This portion of the interview usually lasted 60 to 90 minutes. Near the end of the interview, the interviewees were shown eleven advertisements from magazines in India about various products having fragrances; the products featured included bath soaps, lotions, and hair oil. The interviewees were asked if they had seen the ad before, used the products, and what type of person would use that specific product. The total interview lasted from 90 minutes to three hours. The open-ended and relaxed format allowed the interviewees to talk about as many different fragrances as they wished.

In addition, information about the family backgrounds of the interviewees was gathered as a potential influencing factor in the usage of various fragrances. In India, sons stay with their parents after marriage; thus in-marrying women are often influenced by the habits of in-laws. However, the in-laws of the interviewees were not included in the background information, since they had not lived with their in-laws or did not live with them for sufficient time to learn and acquire their habits. The gathered data were classified as field notes; observations from each interview were noted separately.

EXPLANATIONS OF SPECIFIC TERMS AND PRACTICES MENTIONED IN THE FIELD NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Some terms and practices in India mentioned in most of the interviews are explained in the following paragraphs:

1. Burning of Incense: Incense is burned daily in household shrines and in temples ‘in front of God’. Statues or pictures of God are placed on a table or at some elevated place in the home; the figures/images may be of one God or of many different Gods. Offerings are put on at the same table or on a separate table directly in front of it. Different deities are worshipped in different parts of India and the mode of worship may also differ. However, God is worshipped in some physical form in all parts of the country, and incense burning is common in all parts of the country. It is believed that the smoke from the incense will carry away with it all the impurities and negative emotions present in the hearts of people and in the atmosphere. The lingering scent of incense seems to be pleasing to most people and is thought to uplift spirits and give a feeling of freshness. The most popular incense fragrances in India are sandalwood, rose, jasmine; incense is also available without any fragrance.

2. Wearing threaded flowers in hair: Women wear various small flowers, in single or multiple colors, which are threaded together; the commonly used Indian flowers are jasmine, bela, and juhi. These flowers are known by different names in different parts of the country. Women can string the flowers together at home or buy pre-threaded flowers, in simple patterns or in elaborate designs, from the florist. These strings of flowers are called "gajara"; typically, simply threaded flowers are worn daily at home and elaborately woven patterns are worn on special occasions such as weddings and festivals. Flowers
are worn only on happy occasions. Some of the florists may deliver these flowers to home for a nominal charge or people can buy them from the florist shops directly. The flowers come in different sizes, and the price varies from few cents to tens of dollars depending on the pattern, the types of flowers used, and the length of the gajara. Flowers are less expensive in India than in the U.S.; e.g., a dozen roses cost approximately U.S. $1 in India. The flowers usually have a strong fragrance; when a woman wearing a gajara enters a room, the fragrance flows around her.

3. Putting dried flowers and leaves in clothes:
The threaded flowers such as jasmine and bela, mentioned above, retain their fragrance even after they are dry and shriveled. People use the dried flowers to scent cupboards and clothes. Also, the leaves of some trees, e.g., neem and eucalyptus, which have a strong smell, are dried and placed in clothes, to keep moths away.

4. Offering flowers to God: In India, religious rituals are performed daily at homes and in temples where incense is burned and various things, such as fresh fruits, cooked food and fresh flowers are offered while saying different prayers to God. Fresh flowers may be put on the statue of God itself, or on the frame holding the picture; only selected varieties of flowers are offered. These flowers are either grown in one’s own garden or purchased from a florist. In villages and small cities, most of the homes have small flowering shrubs in containers or in the garden. The florist usually delivers fresh flowers wrapped in particular leaves to homes everyday; the same florist may deliver the flowers for many years. The flowers to be delivered and the size of the package are usually arranged in advance and the florist is normally paid on a monthly basis.

5. Putting tube roses or other flowers in rooms:
The different varieties of flowers in India, some of which are also available in the U.S., generally have stronger aromas than the U.S. varieties, probably due to the warmer climate of India and the natural breeds rather than the hybrid varieties found in the U.S.. A bunch of eight to ten long-stemmed tube roses which give off a strong fragrance at night is kept in living rooms or bedrooms. At night the fragrance spreads to all parts of the home. These flowers are available in most parts of the country in the summer. The use of air fresheners is not common in India, since fresh air circulates in the home virtually all the time.

6. Using perfumes- variety, price, size: Most of the U.S. and European perfumes are available in India from the street vendors. The perfumes manufactured in India are very limited in variety and are almost never advertised. The advertising is mostly by word-of-mouth. No distinction is made between perfumes for men and women. The perfumes are very expensive by Indian standards; a 4 oz. bottle of perfume costs approximately U.S. $5-10, about 5-10% of an average middle-class person’s monthly salary. Regular use of perfumes is seen as unnecessary, since women wear numerous flowers. In addition, most talcum powders, used regularly in summer, have strong fragrances. A bottle of perfume will usually last for two generations, since perfumes are used only on special occasions like weddings and festivals and the fragrance is very strong; 1 or 2 drops will linger for many days. In India, the wedding season is from November to June; the precise wedding date is decided based on the traditional Indian Almanac. All relatives, friends, and acquaintances are invited during the actual wedding ceremony, while the reception may be limited to close friends and family members.

Perfumes have no religious significance; in fact, very religious people do not use perfume, because they believe that it is an unnecessary pampering of the body. Religious devotees believe in very simple living with the use of only essential things like food and shelter. These people, although not belonging to any particular religion and a definite minority in number, also prefer to use fragrance-free incense.

7. Putting tiny cotton balls in the ear: One or two drops of perfume are applied to a tiny cotton ball and placed in the upper, outer portion of the ear; this is done on special occasions such as weddings. This practice is common in the rural parts of India, as well as in some cities, and, the fragrance lingers for days.

8. Sprinkling rose water: At weddings and other social functions, rose water or other perfumed water is sprayed on guests; this practice is prevalent in most parts of the country. In addition, a cotton ball sprayed with perfume is rubbed on the back side of the guests’ palms.
9. Using talcum powder: Although, Indian talcum powder is basically the same as in the U.S., it comes in a range of fragrances, from very mild to strong. In the hot summer of India, talcum powder also serves as an anti-perspirant and a deodorant. Talcum powder is the most common and widely used cosmetic for both men and women.

10. Using body packs: A body pack is applied at the time of weddings and festive occasions. A paste is rubbed on the whole body and washed off in a few minutes; specific ingredients vary from one part of the country to another, and sandalwood paste or a few drops of perfume are usually added. This pack may be purchased in stores in powder form to which water is added to make a paste or made at home. The various ingredients in the pack act as astringents and moisturizers.

11. Using henna on hands and hair: Henna is a powdered plant extract which has a natural scent of its own; no other fragrances are added to it. In addition, henna imparts a red color when applied on hands or on hair. Applied in a paste form in intricate designs on both palms at the time of festivals and at weddings, henna treatment is also often applied at nonfestival times to add luster to the hair.

12. Using scented erasers: Scented erasers are quite popular among children in India; various fruit scents and perfumes are used, although the perfumed scent is not identified with any specific branded fragrance. Scented erasers are favorite of virtually all school-age and college students.

13. The smell of wet soil: Most of the pavements and some of the roads in rural parts of India are not covered with concrete or asphalt. When rain falls, the hot soil becomes moist and exudes a mild scent which pervades the atmosphere.

RESULTS

Based on the interviews, specific patterns of behavior were observed and recorded. The results of this preliminary research presented below; call for a more detailed study.

1. Preference towards same flavors and fragrances (rose, kevada, khas):

The interviewees mentioned the use of the same Indian fragrances in food products, incense, and sometimes as perfumes. Rose, kevada, and khas were the favorites; these flavors have their origin in natural plants available in India. The interviewees mentioned that they order these products from either India or the Indian grocery store in the U.S. In India, these products are also used for cooling purposes, e.g., khas fragrance is sprayed on the air coolers so that the fragrance spreads in the home while the cool air circulates. Only one person used khas fragrance as a perfume, the rest of the informants used it as a food flavor.

The interviewees indicated they have not changed much in the use of scented products since their arrival in the U.S. The products they desire are available in the Indian grocery stores in all the major cities in the U.S. In addition, the interviewees continued the use of various products such as betelnuts, Indian food flavors, incense, after moving to the U.S..

2. Preference for similar things from India:

Most of the people mentioned that they liked incense, food flavors, scented erasers, braided flowers, and betelnuts. Betelnuts come in different types and are cut in various shapes and sizes; many flavors and colors are added to them. Betelnuts are usually eaten after the meal for freshening the breath, although many people also eat betelnut other times of the day. Betelnut is also thought to aid in digestion when eaten with betel leaves and some other ingredients. Dry betelnuts are a favorite in India and are consumed in large quantities.

3. Liking for fragrances:

Almost all interviewees indicated they like to use fragrances in one form or another. One of the women mentioned she did not use many commercially available fragrances, but she experienced pleasure through the smells and aromas present in her environment, especially the aroma of various food products, which reminds her of her mother's hands after cooking. This is consistent with Hazlitt's observation that smells remind us of specific people (Hazlitt 1931). The interviewees mentioned that although they did not like to use actual perfumes on a daily basis, they do like to use other fragranced cosmetic products.
such as deodorants and scented talcum powders everyday.

One of the interviewee made it very clear that fragrance is not as important an attribute as good value and price. She indicated that, although she would like to use perfumes and other fragrances, she considers such products to be waste of money. Not surprisingly, due to the adverse financial conditions she experienced as a child, her parents taught her that things should not be bought unless they are absolutely essential.

4. Use of fragrances in home:

All of the women interviewed indicated that they use various cleaning products and air fresheners to fragrance their homes. One woman mentioned that she likes to light an incense stick just before guests arrive to keep her home scented.

5. Feeling of freshness:

All of the women interviewed mentioned they like to use a fragrance because it makes them feel fresh and good about themselves, makes them think pleasant things, and have positive feeling about their surroundings. One interviewee mentioned that she does not feel "complete" without the use of perfumes.

6. Use of perfumes only on special occasions:

Byrne-Quinn (1988) has described perfumes as:

"Messengers that give the user confidence in obtaining a certain level of gratification; social or biological-psychological" (p. 206).

All the interviewees in the study indicated that they do not specifically use perfumes daily. Rather, perfumes are used only on special occasions. They stressed that the use of perfumes makes them feel more attractive and confident about themselves in social gatherings.

One woman mentioned that "sophisticated" people use fragrances. Images presented in the advertising campaigns of perfumes may play an important role in such perceptions (Norcy 1988). The interviewees generally said, however, that they would not like to use perfumes daily even if the perfumes were less expensive. This may be a reflection of the emphasis on "simple living and high thinking" typically taught by parents in India.

7. Inclination towards the use of new and different perfumes:

There was no similarity in the brands of perfumes used. One woman had never bought perfume herself; her only perfumes had been received as gifts. Each interviewee had a different favorite. Most of the interviewees (4 out of 6) liked to try new perfumes, and they did not like to use the same perfume twice in a row because they thought that would be boring. This is also a common habit observed in people from India other than the interviewees. One interviewee said she likes to try different perfumes, and she buys a different product each time she purchases perfume. Although she may buy a favored fragrance more than once, she does not like to use the same perfume twice in a row.

Interestingly, she seems to like people to associate her with new products in general. Two interviewees who mentioned they use the same brands from time to time have young children, whose skins, they indicated, would be irritated by a change in products.

8. Evoked memories of past:

The thought of various fragrances used in India evoked memories of home and family members in India for all the interviewees. Most of them mentioned family members who liked to use perfumes. Some of them talked about their life in India and about some personal incidents that happened there, even though they did not relate this to fragrance use in particular. As Hazlitt pointed out, smells are remembered longer than visible objects and remind us about events and persons associated with them (Hazlitt 1931).

9. Liking for cigarette and petrol smell:

Three interviewees mentioned they liked the smell of cigarettes and petrol (gas), but they weren't sure why they liked these odors. Cigarette smoking is not prohibited in most of the public places in India. The presence of countless vehicles and the lack of strict pollution enforcement laws allow for petrol and diesel leaks and smells. These odors may be a reminder of the environment of India for these interviewees. Odor recognition described by Rabin and Cain...
comes into play here (Rabin and Cain 1984). One person mentioned that she wets the doorsteps in front of her apartment to bring out the wet soil scent present in the atmosphere in India during the monsoon season. The interviewees in general also wanted to recreate a familiar atmosphere in the U.S. by using the Indian products such as incense.

ANALYSIS OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS

The advertisements centered on beautiful and happy faces, mostly of women. The advertising copy explained how the product would make the buyers satisfied. In most of the advertisements, the ingredients of the product and their beneficial effects were specified.

The interviewees had seen most of the advertisements shown or advertisements for the same brands when they were in India. They had used most of the products. However, five of the eleven advertisements had not been seen by most of the interviewees, perhaps because the advertisements were introduced after their leaving India or due to regional advertising by the manufacturing companies. The interviewees had not tried the products in the advertisements which they had not seen. Some mentioned that they had not used the products even though they had seen the advertisements for them because these products were unavailable in their region in India or they were dissatisfied with the product.

Some of the advertisements did influence the interviewees to use the products. However, family members and friends were equally influential in the buying decisions. In India, people usually go shopping with friends and thus, these friends' opinions matter.

Responses to the question, "What type of person would use this advertised product?" varied from person to person. In general the answer seemed to reflect an ideal type of individual which the interviewee might try to emulate. For example, interviewee # 2 thought that a sophisticated person would use these products; she connected the use of perfumes with a higher status in society to which she aspired. On the other hand, interviewee # 5 mentioned that people who want to show off would use these products. She herself did not use any perfumes or other products with fragrances herself as she thought of it as squandering money. Two interviewees thought that romantic and lively, happy-go-lucky persons would use these products. The answers to "Did the product deliver what the ad promised?" about the satisfaction derived from the products varied from satisfied to dissatisfied. One interviewee mentioned that she was dissatisfied because the product (bath soap) made her hands rough and she expected better quality from the company; another interviewee was satisfied with the same product. Personal opinions and expectations from the product and the manufacturing company might be a reason for differences in opinions.

CONCLUSION

This study is by no means exhaustive, yet it is representative of the population to some extent. India, also called a sub-continent, is a vast and diverse country; each of its twenty-five states and seven Union Territories has its own distinctive culture. The sample of women represents different age groups, different financial backgrounds, and various regions in India.

The differences found in the interviews can be attributed primarily to regional diversities and the associated customs such as the practice of sprinkling rose water, use of body packs, and use of henna. The customs and traditions prevalent in different parts of the country e.g., burning incense, offering food to God, are usually carried out by people regardless of the financial condition. The interviewees with children were, in general more concerned with getting good value for their products.

Many similarities among the subjects can be attributed to the common culture of India. The liking for fragrance was ubiquitous; the interviewees expressed a wish to use more products with fragrances. It was interesting to note that even though the interviewees felt "fresh," "sophisticated," and better about themselves with the use of perfumes, they did not want to use perfumes daily. They preferred to use products with trace fragrances. The wish to surround themselves and their living environment with pleasing fragrances and aromas was evident in all the interviews.

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SESSION INTRODUCTION

Although sex is determined biologically and gender socially, the concepts of sex and gender are deeply intertwined because gender assignment and attributions have been made largely on the basis of biological sex. As a consequence, gender differences (e.g., masculine vs. feminine symbols; self concepts, identities and personalities; and roles and labor divisions) have historically been perceived as biologically predetermined and thus "natural". In addition, gender differences are associated with dichotomous metaphors and images, and are differentially value-laden. For example, characteristics associated with the masculine, and thus men, such as objective, rational, scientific and active are more highly valued than characteristics associated with the feminine, and thus women, such as subjective, emotional, artistic and passive.

Feminist analyses of gender raise at least three fundamental challenges to these views. First, they unequivocally reject the "gender = biology" perspective, and argue that gender is socially constructed. Second, the construction of gender symbols, gender structures and individual genders are seen to produce a fundamentally and inescapably gendered social life, including the processes, activities, and products of science. Third, feminists argue that the differential values assigned to gender constructions have resulted in systematic biases which favor masculine, and negate and discredit feminine, perspectives in scientific enterprise.

As consumer researchers begin to seriously grapple with gender issues, it is timely to consider the implications arising from these feminist analyses. Towards this goal, the purpose of this proposed special session, "The Social Construction of Gender: Feminist Re-Visions", is to explore the social construction of gender in consumer research, and to begin to assess how gender has been systematically written into, and out of, the consumer research enterprise. This session, co-chaired by Julia Bristor and Eileen Fischer, and discussed by Reba L. Keele, will consist of four papers, each of which brings a feminist perspective to bear on important aspects and implications of the social construction of gender.

The first paper, "Feminist Science and Consumer Research," by Alladi Venkatesh, examines the social construction of gender via feminist theory and philosophy of science. He shows how gender is written into consumer research by virtue of its ties to the positivist model of science. He also shows how gender is written out of consumer research in the sense that it lacks both a gender-based epistemology, and an historical and cultural construction of the gender of the consumer as a theoretically legitimate category of inquiry.

The next two papers examine ways in which these social constructions of gender affect research on consumers. Following ideas developed by Venkatesh, Lisa Peñaloza's paper "Boundary Construction, Feminism and Consumer Research," deals with the way in which dichotomous notions of gender affect research in consumer behavior on sex and gender. She argues that the way in which gender is construed leads to a confounding of biological sex and socially constructed gender. She also probes the manner in which the dichotomous world view has led researchers who deal with the construct of gender roles to define them as rigid and opposing. She argues that research on gender in consumer behavior cannot progress until a more grounded understanding of gender is developed, recognizing how it differs from biological sex, and how socially constructed definitions of gender may fail to conform to a strictly dichotomous model.

Eileen Fischer and Julia Bristor's paper, "The Gender of the Consumer: A Feminist Perspective on the Marketing Concept," deals with some distinctly different implications of the dichotomous notion of gender for theory and research concerning consumers. They focus on the way in which the
relationship between marketers and consumers has been construed, particularly as it is expressed in the marketing concept. They argue that our understanding of the marketer/consumer relationship is conditioned by a stereotyped notion of male/female relationships which is inherently exploitative and manipulative. They suggest that theoretical development and enriched practice may result from envisioning alternative models of relationships as a basis for marketer/consumer interactions.

In the final paper, "Feminism and Anthropology: The Semiotics of Clerical Work," Cathleen Almstead uses an anthropological approach to show how gender can be written into the research process. Adopting a woman-as-knower epistemology, she examines the results of gender constructions as they are incorporated into the self-perceptions and understandings of women as workers, mothers, consumers, wives, etc. This work is especially significant in that by employing methods that neither objectify the consumer, nor treat her in the distinctively masculine stimulus-response fashion, she demonstrates the possibility of a type of science that is more consistent with the insights of feminist analyses.

Using the ongoing debates concerning philosophy of science as a backdrop, the session brings into relief critical questions about the role of gender in both the processes and products of consumer research. As a first step toward a re-vision of gender, this session offers a critical assessment of how gender and gender construction have been written into, and out of, consumer research. Thus, this special session will be of great interest and value to those consumer researchers concerned with gender and/or philosophic issues. In particular, this session offers three main benefits. First, it shows how the feminist philosophy of science literature can be fruitfully applied to issues in consumer research. Second, it highlights some of the ways in which underlying and implicit scientific commitments affect research practice and products. Third, this session shows how the boundaries of what constitute legitimate research topics and perspectives must be reconsidered in order to advance the state of consumer research knowledge.