Exploring Gendered Servicescapes

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What makes a servicescape "gendered," and what are the implications of a servicescape being "gendered"? To explore these questions, we elicited responses to a series of scenarios describing people of one sex entering retail environments we might normally associate with the other sex. One scenario described, for instance, a man entering a fabric store, while another described a woman entering an auto repair shop.

Our hermeneutic analysis of the responses revealed that very few tangible physical cues other than the sex of customers and service providers consistently denote a "male" versus a "female" environment, but that stereotypes associated with the expected sex of people in the setting foster deep-seated beliefs about how a servicescape is gendered. Our analysis also suggests that changing assumptions regarding the gender of a servicescape would require direct confrontation of widespread stereotypes. Simple manipulation of cues in the physical design of space would probably be inadequate.