DEODORIZED CULTURE: ANTHROPOLOGY OF SMELL IN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT: The sense of smell, though rarely considered important in America, clearly delineates cultural boundaries; this is both demonstrated and promoted through marketing and advertising of consumer products. Historical analyses is invoked to explain why Americans have different tolerances for body odor than their European predecessors. Cultural perceptions of smell are assessed according to Mary Douglas's models; they are also related to American views of disease and social structure. Odor control manifests as both the American ideal of *self-control* and as individual expression, or *release*. The inherent contradictions of these cognitive models are underscored when American culture is examined in terms of its need to control body and environmental odors.

INTRODUCTION

American perceptions of the world are characterized by pervasive visual metaphors and symbolism. We "see" what each other mean, take a "look" at situations, and take risks on "blind" faith. The cultural embrace of science and technology as truth has privileged the eyes in a "seeing is believing" understanding of life. We can gain a key insight in the American sense of self, however, through analysis of cultural ideals perceived through study of the sense of smell. Although few Americans boast of the discriminatory ability of their nose, there are keen notions regarding which odors are pleasing and which are offensive.

Patterns of preference and repulsion to specific odors vary widely between individuals due primarily to the emotions and memories evoked through the sense of smell. The widespread consensus on the offensive quality of natural body odor, however, is a culturally produced perception that is not matched in many other cultures around the world. Ruth Winter's observations in *The Smell Book* (1976:17) capture the extent of this peculiar preoccupation with personal and environmental deodorization:

> "The self-consciousness about our own and others' body odor is fed constantly today by television, newspaper, and magazine advertisements. We are literally told that we stink - our mouths, our armpits, and our genitals need special products to make them and us socially acceptable. As a result of this obsession, we have done our best to repress smells in our world. Billions and billions of dollars worth of vented bathrooms, household and body deodorants, perfumes and other anti-smell devices have been developed (and become integral parts of our lives)."

As eager consumers of deodorant and re-odorant products, Americans in the 20th century have embodied the ideals of self-control and moral and physical purity which were carried to this country by the Puritans and the Quakers in the 17th and 18th centuries. The association between cleanliness and godliness, nurtured through the 19th century by the public

health and sanitary reform movements, linked disease to the stench of cities and the masses.[1] Despite the widespread acceptance of germ theory, the stink-disease association was never truly divorced; odor continued to represent a threat to well-being. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the locus of public health and hygiene was centered on the individual; therefore, concern shifted from sewer to body odors.

Throughout the 20th century, American ideas regarding cleanliness, with particular attention to body odor have diverged from European practices of personal hygiene. The years surrounding the turn of the century in America were marked by a significant increase in industrialization, urbanization and most importantly, a deluge of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. The immigrants' characteristic and unfamiliar body odors were markedly different from those of the fairly homogeneous resident population. Deodorization became a priority in the practice of personal hygiene so that residents could dissociate themselves from the newcomers who were perceived as low status, diseased and unwelcome.

With advances in the science and technology of deodorization by mid-century more people had access to expensive soaps and deodorants formerly only available to the wealthy; thus, their use became pervasive throughout the US. Use of scent strategy in marketing and advertising exploded in the 1970s. By the 1980s, everything from shampoo to laundry detergent to greeting cards were doused with one scent or another in order to attract consumers. The market was saturated with preparations beckoning Americans to *control* various body effluvia, and the fragrance industry provided the means to *release* the sense of self through enhancement of personal aroma with perfume.

Finally, history has made a full turn and the danger of social odors are again acknowledged. The threat of environmental degradation has heightened consumer awareness of the harmful effects of technological progress. No longer can we tolerate the simple masking of toxins and pollution with perfume and "lemon fresh scent." The very fragrances that are supposed to combat the ills and evil of the environment by making our immediate surroundings pleasant smelling are in fact making people sick. Environmental Illness, named the disease of the 20th century (Lamb 1989), is the catchall category that includes reactions to the varied allergy-provoking chemicals (and smells) in our environment. Rather than dubbing sensitive individuals hypochondriacs and somatizers, a growing counter-culture has taken their complaints to heart and the market has begun to respond with the promotion of unscented products including laundry detergent, hand lotions and soaps for "sensitive skin." The anti-fragrance movement has caused the perfume industry to resort to the high cost of scented advertisements in fashion magazines and department store bills, much to the dismay of the fed-up, environmentally sensitive public. Interestingly, there is still a taboo on body odor. Although there is movement to eliminate the added "fresh" smelling fragrance, the American ideal of self-control is still symbolized by a clean and odorless body.

The Sense of Smell

The nose is little-appreciated in American culture as an instrument of perception. There seems to be more concern with its shape and size than in the organ's role in

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[1] Up to this point the concepts of sanitation in America were similar to those in France, Holland and England.

discriminating the nuances of the environment. While other cultures value subtle changes in the odor of bodily secretions in diagnosing disease or emotional state (Howes 1989), Americans tend to underestimate, or at least underuse, the sense of smell. Binary oppositions of pleasing-repulsive, or fresh-bad, seem to be suitable differentiations for us. Although reductionist (we of course recognize strawberry from leather), as a culture we seem to prefer to remain as detached as possible from this sense which has such great power over us.

The source of anxiety may be attributed to the fact that odors are invisible, and we seem to have a lot more difficulty categorizing things we cannot see or measure. This inability to organize and detail smells due to lack of descriptive vocabulary and osmotic sophistication places odor in Mary Douglas's (1966) realm of danger; we are not quite sure what to do with scents. Physiologically, American noses do not differ much from noses around the world, but there is little real or symbolic significance awarded to the possession of a keen sense of smell in the US. Nevertheless, odor has remarkable influence on American behavior. Body odor which is natural and basically inescapable has become a source of true embarrassment and anxiety.

Practically speaking, one of the reasons that Americans today are more sensitive to body odor than societies in Europe, Asia, or Africa is that the environment is generally free of body odor. In other societies where natural body odor is the norm, the essence becomes background smell and is not as distinctive.[2] Therefore, as Americans we both bathe because we smell and smell because we bathe.

The significance of the sense of self in relation to sense of smell does not lie merely in the hyperawareness of body odor, but in the fact that it has a negative value. Fear of body odor represents a complex set of notions about the self in relation to the body and in relation to society. An analysis of America's relationship to the aroma of the body whether it comes from a perfume bottle, bar of soap, or is naturally produced, reveals our cultural values as well as our sense of social structure. The self is at once the physical body and has a physical body. Scheper-Hughes and Locke(1982:7) speak of the body as "simultaneously a physical and symbolic artifact, as both naturally and culturally produced, and securely anchored in a particular historic moment". As a part of nature the body secretes such things as sweat, urine, feces and blood; it participates in sexual intercourse, and it interacts with the environment through sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. The role of this natural body in social interaction is precarious, and must be monitored by the self as it interacts with other bodies according to cultural standards (O'Neill 1985). The strict segregation of private and social spheres dictates where behaviors, and their consequent odors, are appropriate: smells that waft into the wrong environment are taboo. Our cultural hysteria with regard to farting exemplifies this notion.

Historically, in Protestant America, "the flesh was a symbol of moral corruption which threatened the order of the world; the flesh had to be subdued by the disciplines" (O'Neill 1985:36). Puritan ethics, which frame American ideology, preach asceticism, will-power, and

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[2] That other societies are not as conscious of body odor may be attributed to the little understood phenomenon termed "olfactory adaptation." In this phenomenon, the nose is no longer sensitive to smells that it is exposed to on a continual basis.

hard work. The combination of this notion with the American Dream of material success and leisure is an inherent contradiction in American life. We are supposed to work hard, yet smell like we are not working at all. In order to maintain the facade that one has high status and is living the good life, one must eliminate the traces of perspiration odor associated with physical labor.

Accompanying this control, however, is the notion of release. Pheromone theory posits that some body odors function to attract the opposite sex, yet by faithfully bathing in secular ritual to retain moral fortitude, we also wash away the means to attract our mate. Thanks to the perfume industry, however, Americans may purchase the odors of flowers, fruits and animals in complex preparations to enhance our attractiveness in sexual endeavors.

CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF SMELL

The use of perfume and scent is common historically and cross-culturally. Cultural interpretations of scent, however, may vary significantly. That odor evaluation is learned is demonstrated by the fact that American children can distinguish the same smells as adults but do not find smells to be offensive. In the early 1970s, Trygg Engen's experiments found that "although children can discriminate between odors they show very little aversion to any odor when they are under the age of five" (Winter 1976:139). The evaluation of an odor as positive or negative goes beyond cognitive experience to include physical and/or emotional stimulation. The olfactory response to an aroma may stimulate hunger, sexual arousal, or nausea as physical reactions. Because the sense of smell is better linked to memory than any of the senses, emotions may be evoked with a particular aroma. Although "odors themselves are not the causes of disease" they can produce a variety of discomforts including "lowered appetite for food, lowered water consumption, impaired respiration, functional nausea and vomiting, insomnia, and mental perturbation" (McCord and Witheridge 1949:65). With this in mind odor pollution has great potential to affect physical well-being and it is not surprising that it was historically linked to disease.

Smell, Disease and Social Structure

Writers on the social history of smell and fragrance trace Western correlations between body odor, health, and social status to the disease theories of post-Renaissance Europe (Corbin 1986; McCord and Witheridge 1949; Winter 1976). Prior to the association between odor and disease, stink was the norm and fashion even promoted the enhancement of body odor with perfume and oils based in excrement and animal secretions (musk, civet, ambergris) as a means to increase attractiveness (Corbin 1986). Patrick Suskind captures the atmosphere of the period in his novel *Perfume*:

> "The peasant stank as did the priest, the apprentice as did his master's wife, the whole of the aristocracy stank . . . for in the eighteenth century there was nothing to hinder the bacteria busy at decomposition, and so there was no human activity, either constructive or destructive, no manifestation of germinating or decaying life that was not accompanied by stench" (1986:4).

With the demographic movement to cities accompanied by an increase in morbidity due to contagious disease, smell became associated with illness and death. Although "the masses

had long monitored themselves for smells as symptoms of disease . . . spontaneously report[ing] to the doctor changes in odors of sweat, smell, stools, urine, sputum, ulcers or linen that had been in contact with invalid bodies" (Corbin 1986:4-2), the smell of the plagues and epidemics which hit the cities was overwhelming and distinctive. The children's rhyme "ring around the rosie" plays on the popular notion of using pleasant fragrance (posey) to protect oneself from the deadly smell of plague: "for a long time the best protection against disease remained possession of a shield against the smells, smelling strongly oneself, and also sniffing odors of one's choosing" (Corbin 1986:64). This practice, however, proved impotent and the means to achieve positive health was to avoid the city and the stench of the diseased masses altogether. By the late 18th century "aerotherapy" had become popular in France as a medical prescription; the elite would take to the heights or the country to preserve their health (Corbin 1986:78). Along with this move to the countryside developed a lesser need to wear heavy scent. The subtlety of personal aroma became a sign of one's social status. Additionally, sensitivity to strong odor, whether it be perfume or the fetid "dens of the poor," also demonstrated the mask of privilege. Sensitivity to odor was "evidence of ... refinement and proved ... ignorance to the sweat of hard labor" (Corbin 1986:141).

These ideas carried over to succeeding generations of Europeans even after public health sanitation projects. As morbidity and mortality rates began to decrease with the confinement of defecation and burial of the dead, there was an increasing notion that personal cleanliness would also protect one from illness: "once the smell of excreta had been got rid of, the personal odors of perspiration, which revealed the inner identity of the "I" came to the fore" (Corbin 1986:14-2). Although bodily hygiene was encouraged, the practice of bathing was slow to catch on. Fear of the loss of vitality and the practical difficulties involved in obtaining large quantities of water interfered with the actual occurrence of bathing. In an effort to emulate the leisure class, the growing bourgeois class modified the recommendations of personal hygiene to only washing the visible parts of the body and increased the efforts of keeping one's clothing clean. Evidence of this practice is also found in the 19th century *Mother at Home and Household Magazine* (1869), which consistently advised its readers of laundry cleaning, but not of bathing and body odor. The scarcity of bathtubs, running water, heat, and soap maintained the practice of bathing as a rare occurrence until the beginnings of this century. Although the use of perfume had become popular in Europe by the seventeenth century, "personal cleanliness was still considered quaint." The only clean people in Europe were said to be the Puritans and the Quakers (Winter 1976:100). Perhaps in addition to associating sickness with earthly sin (Gillick 1984), they also incorporated the health-sickness ideas to create the "cleanliness is next to godliness" principle.

The fresh air of the virgin American wilderness must have been a welcome relief to newcomers from the English cesspool cities and the months of suffocation aboard ship. The Protestant promotion of cleanliness was more closely related to symbolic moral purity than a notion of preventative health or representative of social status. Filth was associated with such aberrations as drunkenness, and was a reflection of one's moral character. Benjamin Paul (1958:238) points out that although cleanliness is next to godliness in American ideology, "bathing is neither as old nor as general as people now assume. Ackerknect reminds us that President Fillmore was as much attacked for buying a bathtub for the White House in 1851 as was Harry Truman in our time for his balcony". With the growth of industrialization, the increasing significance of class status, and poor urban sanitation, American ideas about

cleanliness paralleled the fashions of their European cousins. Although the Protestant work ethic would seem to value the sweat of hard labor, intellectual work attained a higher social value than its more pungent physical counterpart.

Toward the end of the 19th century, there was greater emphasis on personal health and hygiene in Europe and America (Gillick 1984; Reiser 1985). Pasteur's discovery of bacteria led to the notion that the best protection against disease is sanitation, thus initiating the unleashing of America's health conscious entrepreneurs. Along with the promotion of proper diet and exercise in this period, commodification of health included the promotion of soaps and shampoos to rid oneself of the filth of the day. In the self-help guides of the turn of the century (Pyle 1912; Woodhull 1906) there is evidence that although bathing was suggested for health maintenance, the general public had not adopted this notion as routine: "considering the fact that cold baths are so beneficial and pleasant... it seems strange that in this country at least such a small number of people take them" (Pyle 1912:61). The hope was that the "inviting appearance of the [new] bathroom fixtures will increase the frequency of their use" (*ibid* 389). Although during this time period bathing was promoted as to increase vigor, the use of soap, especially perfumed soap, was discouraged. The harshness of the soap available at this time was thought to "remove too much protecting oil on the skin" (Woodhull 1906:131). There was, however, the notion that with a lack of bathing "the body slowly acquires a musty odor and the clothes become offensive" (Woodhull 1906:131), an event that Woodhull advises his "undergraduate" readers is the first step to their decline in moral character.

The question arises, however: how did Americans become so aware of body odor and why is it perceived as offensive, even in minute quantities? According to the olfactory adaptation model, people become unconscious of their own odor and that of their surroundings. Though not yet understood physiologically and neurologically, this phenomenon accounts for the fact that our own houses do not seem to have a characteristic odor, but the neighbor's house does. In discriminating body odor the same theory applies: not only is it difficult to detect one's own characteristic odor, but it is also difficult to sense the smell of other people who have similar body odors due to similar diet and environment (Winter 1976). With the indication that bathing was valued but not frequently practiced as late as 1912, there must have been a level of tolerance for some body odor much as there is in Europe today.

In the absence of material addressing this issue, I find myself having to bow to speculation in assessing the origins of the American deodorant fetish. The notion of cleanliness is not inherently linked to odorlessness; that is, a person could still be considered clean despite the odor of perspiration. The elimination of body odor from bathing is relatively short lived, since perspiration and the elimination of bodily wastes is an inevitable part of living as a human being. The peculiarity of American preoccupation with body odor, therefore, cannot be attributed to the obsession with bathing alone. Were this the case, we would not need deodorants and antiperspirants. Additionally, bathing is a valued practice in many parts of the world where deodorization is not an accompanying concern.

What is peculiar to American history that few other countries share is the enormous flux of immigration that occurred near the turn of the century, concurrent with the popularization of personal health and fitness: "In their view [the physical hygienists], the ills

of the turn-of-the-century America - crime and poverty as well as disease - which most historians now associate with immigration, urbanization, and industrialization, could all be cured if only every American would adhere to a strict code of good living" (Gillick 1984:370). In accordance with the theory that smell of the "other" is far more noticeable than the smell of self, it is reasonable to speculate that body odor was especially detectable in American cities during this time period: "in the widespread contempt among the races, nearly every race is prone to charge all other races as being 'smelly'" (McCord and Witheridge 1949:74).

Up to this point in America, the population was fairly homogeneous as most of the "old" immigrants were from northern and western Europe (British, Irish, German, and Norwegian), having similar diets and standards of living based on Protestant values (with the exception of the Irish). The new wave of immigration brought primarily people from southern and eastern Europe who were not only considered to have lower standards of living, but were thought of as a different race (Brown 1933; Garis 1927; Grant and Davison 1930). There was no longer a simple differentiation between the odors of the rich and poor, a distinction remedied easily enough by a bath; at this time there were multiple variations in body odor. Not only would the resident Americans have been sensitive to the smells of the immigrant, but the immigrants would have been aware of each others' distinctive smells. With fierce competition for resources and jobs among immigrants and the desire for integration into society (especially among the second generation), the elimination of one's own characteristic odor could have proved to be a profitable pursuit. Mary Douglas argues that "when a community experiences itself threatened, it will respond by expanding the number of social controls regulating the group's boundaries. Points where outside threats may infiltrate and pollute the inside become the focus of particular regulation and surveillance" (Scheper-Hughes and Locke, 1987:23). The fact that odor pollution cannot be measured and is, therefore, difficult to control may explain the amount of anxiety associated with it. With the burgeoning attentiveness to body smells, especially among those who had limited access to modern indoor plumbing, the consumer market was ripe for the introduction of chemical deodorants and antiperspirants. Although only "one-fifth of American households had indoor flush toilets in 1920 (and) one-half had them in 1930" (Schwartz 1986:168), personal deodorant products were already common in American grooming (Dooley, personal communication).

Prior to the 1940s, people complained of the harshness of soap; only the expensive soaps were mild enough for frequent use but these were too costly for everyday bathing. With improvements in the soap and deodorant industries, the practice of deodorization could now be fully integrated into society. In a 1943 issue of *Mademoiselle* magazine, journalist Bernice Peck advises "there's no nicer smell than a clean smell," and now that soap was made "scientifically" people with all skin types could use soap without irritation. She describes America as a "traditionally clean" society, pointing to the newsreel evidence of the troops in Northern Africa bathing in the water-filled shell holes. An advertisement for Arrid cream deodorant during this same period boasts that it not only "safely stops underarm perspiration" but it also "can be used right after shaving," a practice which also reduces perspiration odor.

By the 1950s the concept of bad breath seized the consumer market. Bristol-Myers' Ipana toothpaste offered the remedy for the "Tell Tale Mouth" (*Ladies Home Journal* 1952); and Listerine antiseptic warns that your social life can be a failure if you are not careful: "it can happen that way when Halitosis [unpleasant breath] steps in" (LHJ, 1952). Advertising during this period reflects the post-war babyboom generation's particular interest in

controlling body odor that made them vulnerable to offending potential mates. In addition to bad breath remedies, the deodorant advertisements also focused on and depicted dating and social life.

In 1960, Arrid deodorant advertisements went as far as to suggest that nervous perspiration produced an odor worse than other kinds of sweat:

> Q: Which perspiration is the worst offender?
> A: The "Emotional" kind. Doctors say it's the big offender in underarm stains and odor. This perspiration comes from bigger more powerful glands - and it causes the most offensive odor.

This copy was accompanied by illustrations of a young couple dancing and talking at a party (LHJ 1960). Three months later Ban brand deodorant picked up on the same idea in their advertisements (*ibid*).

New technology and the potential for use of scent in marketing and advertising gave new life to the retail market in the mid 1960s. Donald Laird's experiments demonstrated that the scent of a product implied something about its quality to the consumer. He produced three batches of identical nylon stockings, one having floral scent, one with fruit scent and one with no added scent. The shoppers overwhelming preferred the floral scented nylons due to the fact that they were "softer and more durable" (Winter 1976:105-6). Now, along with the dialogue of control, the print and expanding television media could introduce the concept of release. While scrubbing her dishes, floors or laundry the housewife could experience the pleasure of fresh lemon or pine scent and create the illusion she was outdoors instead of stuck at home. The opportunity to introduce fragrance as a bonus quality of a product gave the manufacturer a leading edge over similar products among the competition. No longer was the elimination of odor enough for the modern American household; the new trend was to bring the quality of the outdoors into the home. Proctor and Gamble's Lemon Fresh Joy dishwashing soap was the pioneer in this trend. The idea rapidly caught on and within the next decade everything from shampoo to laundry detergent was being marketed for its scent. By 1976 over $500 million per year was spent to add fragrance to commodities. The fragrance industry dedicated 80% of its efforts to this endeavor. According to marketing experts "how a product sells is more important than how well it does its task" (Winter 1976:106).

In taking advantage of the strong relationship between memory and sense of smell, commodity fetishism took on a new dimension. Not only would consumers associate a product with a positive visual image but also a corresponding positive aroma. The back-to-nature ideas of the late 1960s and early 1970s, for example, were marketed by Colgate with their Irish Spring soap which rapidly captured the male market promoting the "manly scent" with their television commercials portraying "rosy cheeked Irish citizens" speaking in "heavy brogues in the invigorating Irish air surrounded by the green Irish countryside" (Winter 1976:120). One of the more blatant representations of scent marketing strategy was the "Gee, Your Hair Smells Terrific" shampoo marketed specifically for its scent.

Feminine Hygiene

In "Consumer Bodies", O'Neill writes: "The most massive exploitation of the body occurs whenever the economy teaches us to disvalue it in its natural state and to revalue it only once

it has been sold grace, spontaneity, vivaciousness, bounce, confidence, smoothness, and freshness" (1985:101). In review of the years in which the market has capitalized on the American sensitivity to the embarrassment of body odor, I find the introduction of feminine hygiene products in the mid 1960s to be the most offensive manipulation of this fear. Not only were these sprays and douches unnecessary, but they were also harmful to the women who used them. This new concern with the odor of female genitalia coincides with the changing roles of women during this same time period. The introduction of the Pill in 1962 gave women greater sexual freedom, and the founding of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966 sprouted the seeds for the Women's Liberation Movement. The movement of women into the labor force, seeking positions traditionally held by men, threatened the traditional social order.

In her theory of Purity and Danger, Mary Douglas argues that when this kind of change occurs "the symbols of self-control become intensified along with those of social control. Boundaries between the individual and political bodies become blurred, and there is a strong concern with matters of ritual and sexual purity" (Scheper-Hughes and Locke 1987:24). Women during this time period were especially vulnerable to advertising about personal "feminine" odor because they were in the precarious position of creating a new cultural identity. On the one hand, although the Pill may have fueled the sexual revolution, menstruation regularly symbolized "the negative image of failed production" (Martin 1987:24-28), and the modern woman's ambiguous role as sexually active but childless. On the other hand, in order to fit into the man's working world and be taken seriously it was to the woman's advantage to dissociate herself from her femininity, including menstruation; this was not an easy task when mini skirts and hot pants were in fashion.

Advertisements in women's magazines took advantage of the new concerns of the modern woman by promoting douches and sprays to stop odor. In the November 1967 issue of *Redbook* a full page advertisement for FDS product reads: "This new product will become as essential to you as your toothbrush." At the bottom of the page is a photo of a naked woman with her back to the camera; she is the image of modesty. The copy goes on to describe the product: "The name is FDS. Feminine Hygiene Deodorant Spray. It is new. A most personal sort of deodorant. An external vaginal deodorant. Unique in all the world. Essential on special days. Welcome protection against odor - every single day. FDS - For your total freshness." On the pages following this ad is another advertisement for an accounting school which boasts earning the salary "you thought only men could earn." The arrangement may be pure coincidence, but the two phenomena seem to go hand in hand.

After four years on the market, the FDA began receiving reports of the adverse effects of these deodorants "ranging from burning and itching to infections" (Winter 1976). Despite these warnings, the consumer market still supports a number of these products. The embarrassment theme is pervasive in the advertising of feminine hygiene products. The tampon and sanitary napkin industries soon followed suit with the introduction of scent to their products. In the fall of 1971 Personal Products Company introduced "New Deodorant Modess" sanitary napkins: "Five days a month, your woman's body needs a special kind of deodorant protection. Because when you have your period, you should be the only one who knows" (Redbook 1971). The negative perception of menstruation can be linked to the idea that "women are in some sinister sense out of control when the menstruate. They are not producing, not continuing the species [nor] preparing to stay at home with the baby" (Martin

1987:248). The tampon and sanitary napkin advertisements consistently show young, active, childless women representing the stereotype of the kind of woman who should be menstruating. Because the American woman participates so regularly in public life, she must control herself and any evidence of her sexuality.

This issue of control has been a dominant theme in the American concept of self for both males and females, whether the referent be diet, exercise or body odor:

> "Self-control, self-discipline, self-denial, and will-power are concepts that are fundamental to the Western system of values . . . Weber (1930) identified these values as key components of the work ethic, a this-worldly asceticism understood as the product of a conjuncture of Protestant and entrepreneurial cosmologies. Norbert Elias (1978) writes of a "civilizing process" whereby controls over bodily expressions were elaborated and internalized as a function of a market-defined social relations and class identity" (Crawford 1984:77).

The secular ritual of showering every morning not only symbolically absolves the individual of any indulgences that may have occurred overnight, but also recreates the characterization of self-control by eliminating body odor. With the aid of scented anti-bacterial soap and deodorant the dedicated worker will be "Sure" to remain "confident, dry, and secure" all day long. No matter how tough the job or what her true emotions are in a situation of uncertainty, no one will see her sweat.

Expressing Individuality Through Scent

While the control of body odor with deodorant may represent the American desire to "fit in" to the group during the work day, the use of perfume at night symbolizes the desire to stand out in the crowd. Crawford argues that "logically entailed in any discourse of self-control is its opposite . . . reveal[ing] an underlying symbolic and structural order . . . which in advanced capitalist societies is inherent in the contradiction between production and consumption" (1984:81). While the forces of production necessitate the repression of sexuality in the workplace, the laws of reproduction depend on the enhancement of sexuality at home. Despite the fact that Americans exert much energy toward the washing away of natural pheromones, there is still much interest in attracting our sex partners with seductive aroma. The names of the popular perfumes on the market are clearly suggestive of the intentions of their use -- Obsession, Scoundrel, Poison -- especially when contrasted to the brand names of feminine hygiene products of the 1970s: Chaste, Demure. In addition to suggesting that the perfume will attract the perfect mate, there is also the association of these purchased scents with wealth: in fact "perfume advertisements in middle- and upper-middle class magazines today often show the trappings of an aristocratic life, including furs, jewels, expensive cars, and representations of royalty" (Winter 1976:36).

In harmony with the principles of capitalism, there is a high price for expressing the real you. Bill Blass (Elle 1990) goes so far as to propose that the modern woman needs three of his perfumes "to be all things to all the women that you are." Although these perfumes are available to anyone who is willing to pay the price, there is the idea that the scent is a representation of a woman's individuality. A common and well-supported perception in this culture of individualism is that these perfumes smell differently on every women who wears them, due to the differential reaction of the chemicals with a woman's natural scent. With

this understanding it is easier for the cheaper "copy-cat" fragrances to succeed in the status-conscious consumer market. A women can carry the air of wealth and success even though she wears a reproduction of a designer scent at a fraction of the cost.

The marketing of perfume has become necessarily more aggressive in the past five years due to a lag in the sale of fragrance in the first half of the decade. The situation of fierce competition among the producers created the need for innovation in advertising strategy. The invention of fragrance scent strips enabled the perfume companies to include a sample of the fragrance with the advertisement at an additional cost of $35,000 (Gibbs 1988) per one page color spread in popular fashion magazines. The addition of scent to the visual image enhances the metonym conveyed in the ads.

Although this strategy has increased sales, it has also stoked controversy in the magazine consumer market. There are complaints that these advertisements invade personal space with "aromas that are offensive and unwanted" (Gibbs 1988:54). The resistance to the odorizing of reading material may be representative of the last straw with regard to the over scenting of the environment. In parallel with the fresh air movement of Renaissance Europe, the encounter of strong fragrance, no matter how pleasant in nature, is perceived as offensive. With laundry detergent, toilet paper, soap, shampoo, skin lotion, and tampons all being scented with various floral and fruity aromas there is an increasing perception of odor pollution.

This inundation of the market, and subsequently personal environments, with scent is literally making people sick. Environmental Illness "may be the ultimate 2Oth century illness, affecting 15 percent of the population" (Lamb 1989:14). Although manufactured fragrance is not the only culprit implicated in the etiology of the syndrome, it is implicated among the numerous other chemicals and toxins that invade our respiratory tracts, and cause such symptoms as fatigue, hives, and severe headache. The symptoms experienced by the sufferers of Environmental Illness are vague in nature and may be markers of various other disorders including psychosymptomatic illness. With the growing popular concern about the state of the environment, however, the complaints of these people strike a note of fear in certain spheres of the American public. The development of clinical ecology on the "fringe of established medicine" has contributed an aura of legitimacy to the illness. Additionally, the fact that the sufferers may file for workers' compensation suggests that there is a general notion that the environment in which we work and live is harmful (Brodsky 1983:731).

Not all sufferers choose to leave the toxic city for the mountains, there is a significant representation of Environmental Illness in California's Bay Area. In this ecologically activist population, employers advertising in the *East Bay Express* weekly newspaper (Spring 1989) may demand that the workplace be maintained "chemically free," directing that workers wear no fragrance whatsoever. Additionally, in housing advertisements, roommates and subletters sought chemical-free/unscented tenants. Until recently, the purchase of unscented products involved not only a time consuming process of locating them, but also the products tended to be the merchandise of expensive health food stores. Within the past few years, however, the mainstream market has begun to recognize the demand for unscented household and personal hygiene commodities. Now Cheer laundry detergent, for example, advertises its unscented "allergy formula."

The resurgence of interest in the environment due to the twentieth anniversary of Earth Day may spark a change in marketing toward the unscenting of all the products that were scented in the 1970s. The perception that the sufferers of Environmental Illness "may be the modern day equivalents of the coal miners' canaries, warning us that the world is becoming as increasingly poisonous place to live" (Lamb 1989:15), has the potential to profoundly change the role of smell in American experience of self and the environment. Personal risk in relation to the noxious environment we live in takes on greater potency than the risk of offensiveness of self in social interaction. Already there has been a ban on aerosol sprays due to the threat of damage to the ozone layer, which was a temporary set back to the antiperspirant market. Interestingly, there is not a movement away from personal cleanliness and deodorization, despite the impending water shortages. There is, however, a growing movement to unmask the danger of the chemicals that fragrance has been covering for the past twenty years.

CONCLUSION

In America, cleanliness is still next to godliness, "an indication that bathing and cleanliness are affect-laden values in contemporary middle-class culture as well as a means to better health" (Paul 1958:236), and a lack of body odor serves as supporting evidence of a high standard of living to the status-conscious individual. Though the metaphors for sight far outnumber those for smell in the "visual hegemony" (Howes 1989:89) of the United States, the saying "I smell a rat" symbolizes the moral implications of smelling like you live in a sewer. According to Puritan values, those who have pure hearts and minds in American ideology also have pure bodies. No matter how expensive the clothing, car, or home, the aroma of the body whether natural or purchased betrays the nature of the self.

In order to maintain this image of self-control and wholesome virtue, as Americans we not only watch what we eat and work our bodies into shape, but also monitor the smell of our bodies by obsessively bathing and stopping perspiration. Though the fashions of body shapes and scents have varied steadily since the initiation of this self-conscious era, Americans have somehow embodied the notion that by nature we are offensive to each other. Thus, in order to assure that our respective social circles will accept us, as a society we put considerable effort into purchasing the appropriate grooming products that will convey the right scent, whether it be deodorant soap, designer fragrance, or no scent at all. Bathing, like so many other aspects of daily life in our culture of consumption, was not long ago considered a luxury; now it has become a necessity. If, in fact, ecologists are correct, impending water shortage could well force significant change in the American tolerance of body odor in the next century. Perhaps, with such an event, Americans will become reacquainted with the subtle changes in the smell of the body due such things as illness or emotional state. The nose has the potential to enhance our perception of our environment, far beyond the ends for which it is used in America today.

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