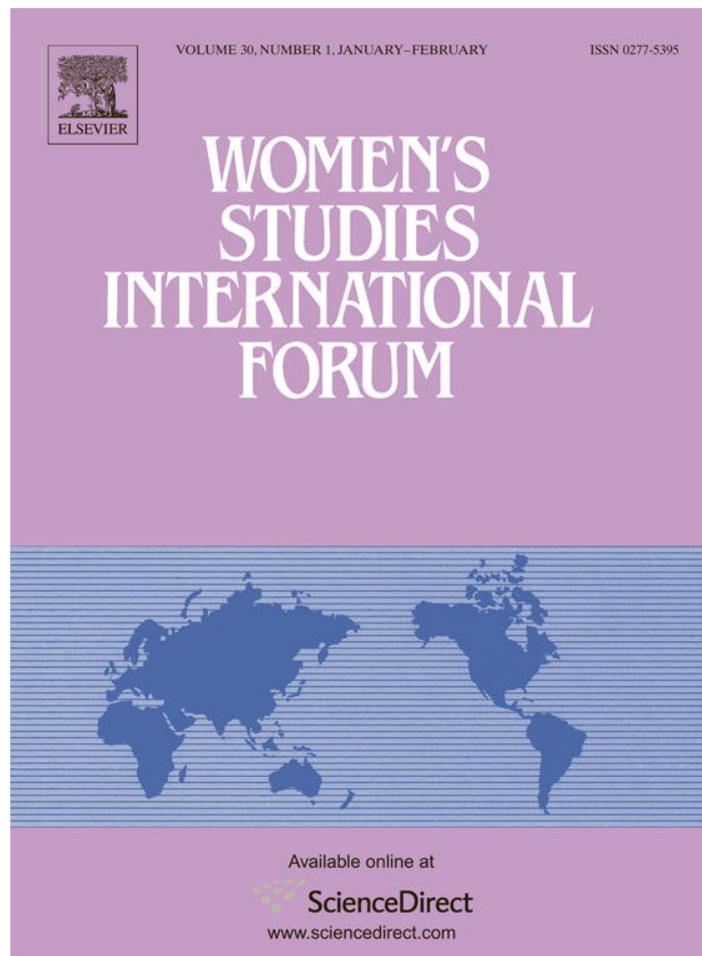


Provided for non-commercial research and educational use only.
Not for reproduction or distribution or commercial use.



This article was originally published in a journal published by Elsevier, and the attached copy is provided by Elsevier for the author's benefit and for the benefit of the author's institution, for non-commercial research and educational use including without limitation use in instruction at your institution, sending it to specific colleagues that you know, and providing a copy to your institution's administrator.

All other uses, reproduction and distribution, including without limitation commercial reprints, selling or licensing copies or access, or posting on open internet sites, your personal or institution's website or repository, are prohibited. For exceptions, permission may be sought for such use through Elsevier's permissions site at:

<http://www.elsevier.com/locate/permissionusematerial>



ELSEVIER

Women's Studies International Forum 30 (2007) 26–39

WOMEN'S STUDIES
INTERNATIONAL
FORUM

www.elsevier.com/locate/wsif

Potions, lotions and lipstick: The gendered consumption of cosmetics and perfumery in socialist and post-socialist urban Bulgaria

Kristen Ghodsee

*Gender and Women's Studies, Bowdoin College, 7100 College Station, Brunswick, ME 04011, USA
School of Social Science, Institute for Advanced Study, One Einstein Drive, Princeton NJ 08540, New Jersey, USA*

Available online 18 January 2007

Synopsis

This article examines the recent history of the consumption of perfumery and cosmetics in urban Bulgaria during the communist and post-communist periods. While the consumption of perfumes, facial creams and other cosmetics was heavily gendered during both eras, the production, distribution and marketing of these goods changed significantly after 1989. This article explores the factors influencing why post-socialist Bulgarian consumers have shown a preference for spending on products like shampoo, make-up, perfume and hair dye rather than on almost any other type of goods, and how these preferences intersect with shifting ideals of femininity and consumerism. Rather than merely giving women greater access to and a wider variety of products to choose from, however the post-1989 proliferation of cosmetics and the advertising used to promote them may have created new and almost impossible beauty standards that many women now feel they must strive to live up to if they want to succeed in the capitalist economy.

© 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

“What do we care about the manipulation inherent in the fashion and cosmetic industries? To tell us they are making a profit by exploiting our needs is like warning a Bangladeshi about cholesterol” (Drakulic, 1991, p. 28)

This article examines the recent history of the consumption of perfumery and cosmetics in urban Bulgaria during the communist and post-communist periods. While the consumption of perfumes, facial creams and other cosmetics was heavily gendered during both eras, the production, distribution and marketing of these goods changed significantly after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, thus altering consumption patterns. Under both systems, women were/are the primary consumers of such goods, but their relationship to cosmetics has changed in the wake of the creation of labor markets and democratic societies. A suppressed desire for higher quality and more

readily available cosmetics and perfumes was met with a rush of imports from the West. This coincided with dramatic decreases in income and increases in advertising specifically targeted at women and girls struggling to survive the political and economic demise of their socialist world, and trying to make sense of changing gender identities in newly hypercommodified societies.

The establishment of free markets in Bulgaria also overlapped with banking collapses, hyperinflation, food rationing and high unemployment (Ghodsee, 2005). In 1996, when the Bulgarian economy finally imploded, the average annual per capita income was \$560, meaning that most Bulgarians had to live on about \$1.50 a day (National Statistical Institute [NSI], 1999, p. 92). At that time, a loaf of bread in a city cost about the equivalent of fifteen cents and most Bulgarian had relatives in the rural areas who maintained household plots for fruits, vegetables, and dairy products. Despite the low cost of food,

expenditures on foods and non-alcoholic beverages was 63.3% of total consumer expenditure in 1997, followed by another 10.2% spent on housing, electricity, water and fuels (NSI, 2005:51). Most consumer goods (such as televisions or household appliances) were sold more or less at international market prices and were beyond the reach of most Bulgarians. In spite of this, it is interesting that spending on cosmetics and perfumes saw significant growth throughout the 1990s. Between 1997 and 2002, retail sales for these products grew by more than 130%, a very large percent increase compared to spending on other categories of goods, such as clothing and footwear, automobiles, or consumer electronics (NSI, 1999:243, 2001:335, 2004:364). This article examines some of the factors influencing why post-socialist urban Bulgarian consumers have shown a preference for spending on products like shampoo, make-up, perfume and hair dye rather than on almost any other type of goods, and how these preferences intersect with shifting ideals of femininity and consumerism.

I am concentrating on urban Bulgaria because although the statistics are not disaggregated, analysis of household budget data in the 2001 census (NSI, 2005) suggests that the bulk of discretionary spending (including that on cosmetics) in Bulgaria occurs primarily in urban areas. I am also focusing on this narrow category, which the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute calls “perfumery and cosmetics,” because the process of expanding consumer markets for these products after 1989 was intimately bound with the changing gender roles that intensified after the onset of capitalism. In particular, I will show how certain communist ideals of revolutionary femininity were employed to justify the paltry production and erratic distribution of beauty products before 1989, particularly those imported from the West. Although demand for these goods was high, the state propaganda machine actively tried to dissuade women from the idea that beauty and fashion were relevant to their identities. In the economic chaos of the post-socialist era, however, new gender roles and beauty standards for women made perfumery and cosmetics more central to many urban women’s lives as they began actively competing in the newly created labor market for jobs in the private sector. However, rather than merely giving women more products to choose from, the post-1989 proliferation of cosmetics and the advertising used to promote them may have created new and almost impossible beauty standards that many women now feel they must strive to live up to if they want to succeed in the capitalist economy.

The emerging capitalist redefinition of gender roles and the changing structure of the economy precipitated

dramatic shifts in what Michael Storper (2001) has called “producerist” and “consumerist” identities. Prior to 1989, most Bulgarians had strong producerist identities; individual subjectivity was primarily determined by one’s relationship to work (the process of production). Storper argues that as societies become more entrenched in the global economy, higher unemployment rates and lower wages are compensated with “consumer surpluses” as the cost of goods decreases because of the availability of cheaper and cheaper imports. Workers’ rights are slowly replaced by consumer rights. This, however, is not a crude binary, but rather a spectrum of potential identities. As consumption practices supersede employment as the primary shaper of individual subjectivity, men and women slide away from the producerist identity pole of the spectrum and further toward the consumerist pole. In Bulgaria, my case study explores how the sliding between these two poles has been uneven. The existence of “consumer surpluses” and “consumer deficits” for different categories of goods and services after 1989 has pushed women more toward the consumerist pole of identity than men.

Furthermore, Bulgarian women’s growing consumerist identities have made them more vulnerable to what Juliet Schor (1999) has called the “aspiration gap” in the United States, whereby individual consumers have an inflated sense of the material things that are required to have a “normal” life. Schor explains that in global capitalist societies, people who once compared their own economic success to that of their immediate friends and neighbors now measure themselves against economic elites, celebrities and “television friends” whose luxurious lifestyles they believe they must emulate in order to be considered “successful.” In addition, advertising continuously expands the list of “necessary” goods, and constant product innovations trick consumers into an endless cycle of buying new versions of things they already own in order to keep up with the latest technological advances. As income polarization increases and the rich get richer, the average middle class family is even less likely to afford the lifestyle of the economic elite, and the aspiration gap grows.

The transition from communism to capitalism unleashed many of the same forces in Bulgaria that are responsible for the growing aspiration gap in the U.S.: the introduction after 1989 of new forms of private media, aggressive advertising, a fascination with celebrities, increasing income polarization and the creation of new economic elites in society. Although there are many differences between the U.S. and Bulgarian cases, the idea of people spending money beyond their means to keep up with an idealized lifestyle accurately describes

one important factor motivating the consumption of perfume and cosmetics in Bulgaria. In a country where conspicuous consumption was once severely restricted and official discourses of femininity disparaged vanity and tried to eradicate bourgeois beauty standards, the expansion of markets for Western toiletries capitalized on urban Bulgarian women's strong rejection of the scarcity of the communist past, and has gendered the aspiration gap in fascinating ways, although not necessarily in a way that materially benefits women.

Research for this article was conducted over a cumulative of two and a half years of fieldwork in Bulgaria in 1999–2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006. During my many visits to the country, I spent time in hair salons and other “houses of beauty” talking to women about changing feminine ideals and the old and new products they used in the pre- and post-1989 eras. In the summer of 2005 and spring of 2006, I also shadowed an Oriflame¹ distributor for 6 weeks and attended a function with 300 Oriflame distributors in Southern Bulgaria. During that time, I spoke to women of all generations and ethnicities (Bulgarian, Turkish, Roma) about the changing market for these goods in Bulgaria. This article is therefore a mixture of ethnography and oral history with my data emerging from the experiences of women's lives collected over 6 years.

Socialism

Bulgaria became a communist country after World War II, and had an orthodox command economy in which almost everything was centrally planned by the communist government (Lampe, 1986). Unlike Hungary or Poland which allowed informal or secondary economies to exist alongside the state-controlled primary economy, private trade was heavily penalized in Bulgaria. Although black markets existed, the risks associated with illegal trading drove prices up and rendered most goods unaffordable to the majority. Among these goods were cosmetics and perfumes. Thus, their availability before 1989 was primarily decided by a handful of central planners without the input of consumers through the market mechanisms of supply and demand.

Marxist–Leninism ideologies compelled most communist states to place an emphasis on the development of heavy industry. Public ownership of the means of the production was the core of communism, but poor agricultural societies like Bulgaria had very little industrial development before World War II. Therefore, the communist state focused its efforts on building new industries, on creating the means of production that the state

would then control in the name of the people who were in return guaranteed an equal share of the redistributed product (Verdery, 1996). Overall, the Bulgarian state was quite successful in its development. The country once produced many manufactured goods including computers, tanks, armaments, forklifts, refrigerators, and buses. The focus on heavy industry, however, drew scarce resources away from the production of consumer goods (Vienna Institute for Comparative Economics [VICES], 1990).

The anthropologist Katherine Verdery (1996:2b) has argued that all command economies faced an inherent contradiction “...between what was necessary to legitimate them — redistributing things to the masses — and what was necessary to their power — accumulating things to the center.” Communist states increased their power by keeping tight control over the means of production. Producing consumer goods like cosmetics that were essentially given away to the end user did not increase the state's power. Verdery argues that although communist citizens took pride in the industrial development of their countries, the satisfaction of personal consumer needs was still very important. Thus, the state tried to impose producerist identities from above while many urban Bulgarians longed for a more consumerist identity.

Since the communist state legitimated its control over the economy by claiming to satisfy the needs of all Bulgarians, it was required to produce at least some consumer goods to redistribute to the people, but these were seldom enough; there were constant shortages of consumer goods and most of the women I interviewed remember hoarding many basic items including soaps, fabrics, glass jars, etc. Most women also recall that communist goods were poor in quality with no variety. Instead of increasing the quantity or quality of goods, the Bulgarian state actively sought to redefine what “needs” were. Women admitted (almost nostalgically) that the communists were very good at providing the very basic needs of food, shelter, heat, work, and clothing. But any desire for things beyond these needs was considered having “bourgeois tastes.” Whereas capitalist advertising strives to create needs for new consumer goods, socialist propaganda tried to reduce the number of goods that people thought they “needed.”

All products produced under a command economy were produced through a quota system whereby a group of central planners (usually men) employed complex statistical models to estimate the demand for certain goods (Hessler, 2004; Verdery, 1996). For those who have had no experience of a command economy, it

might be helpful to give an example of how central planning worked in practice.² If, for instance, the government decided that Bulgaria should produce perfume, a planning committee of economists and enterprise and cooperative directors would be convened to discuss the production quota for domestic perfume. They would decide the type of perfume to make (usually rose) and the type of packaging that would be required (usually the cheapest and most utilitarian packaging that could be produced domestically). Once the scent and the packaging were decided upon, the planners would have to determine how many units of perfume to produce. First, they would start with the total population of Bulgarian women and assume that half of them still had bottles of perfume left over from last year's quota. They would also calculate what was available for socialist brother countries. Then they might subtract the percentage of all women over the age of 65 and under the age of 18. In the end, the planning committee would propose to produce 57,000 bottles of rose oil perfume for the given year.

Once the number of 57,000 was derived, the planning committee would coordinate with the rose growing cooperatives, the rose oil distillers, and the glass manufacturers to secure all of the necessary inputs. The rose oil distiller would claim that it did not produce enough attar to meet its export obligations to the West and the maximum they could supply would be for 40,000 bottles. The glass manufacturers would have many other obligations to the heavy industrial enterprises and could only spare enough time of its machines to make 35,000 bottles. These bottles would have to be half the size of the original plan in order to avoid a timely recalibration of the machinery. The final figure, well below the initial "estimate," would be sent to the appropriate authorities for approval.

At the other end of this long process was the Bulgarian woman. The emancipation of women and the full equality of the sexes was one of the core tenants of communist ideology. Friedrich Engels (1972) had argued that the cause of women's oppression did not stem from the dominance that men held over them, but instead from the institution of private property. Women were not equal because capitalism encouraged a model wherein they were economically dependent on men's wages. Other early socialist champions of women's emancipation such as August Bebel (1904) and Alexandra Kollontai (1997) mercilessly disparaged the commodification of women. Prostitution and bourgeois monogamous marriage were seen as capitalist institutions that perpetuated sexual inequality by allowing men to either temporarily or permanently purchase

women. Thus, a woman's concern with personal beauty or fashion reflected a bourgeois consciousness wherein women believed they had to make themselves attractive in order to better sell themselves to potential husbands.

Communism in Bulgaria and other Eastern European countries saw the full incorporation of women into the labor force as a way of making them independent of men, and communist countries had some of the highest female labor force participation rates in the world, thus officially promoting a producerist identity for women (Gal & Kligman, 2000). Women were also encouraged to study traditionally male trades. Many a communist propaganda poster showed women driving tractors or marching off to work in factories. The communists believed that, as the full equals of men in society, women would not need to concern themselves with such trivialities as being beautiful or attractive.

But communist women did not give up their ideals of femininity so easily. In Bulgaria, as in other East European countries (Gray, 1989; Roman, 2003) women often "dressed up" as a way to escape the drabness of communism. Verdery (1996) has also argued that in societies where there was little to consume, consumption itself became a political act, a way to demonstrate resistance to the regime's control over the intimate details of everyday life. In a society where the state actively tried to homogenize the sexes, women could resist the state by continuing to emphasize their femininity. More recently, the evolutionary biologist, Nancy Etcoff (2000), has argued that the desire for beauty is not the result of societal conditioning, but a biologically-based set of preferences hardwired into human beings. Whatever the reasons, all of the women I interviewed told me that beauty was still important before 1989, no matter what aesthetic the communist state tried to promote through its official women's magazine, *Zhenata Dnes*. Violeta,³ a woman in her late-forties from Smolyan explained, "All women want to be beautiful, and we all believed that women in the West were more beautiful than we were because they had better products and more time than we did."

Although my informants admitted to having wanted the Western cosmetics and perfumes available in the hard currency stores, most of them were forced to make do with whatever the communist planning committees decided to provide. There were several domestic brands of cosmetics produced by the state, but there was never any guarantee that women would be able to get what they wanted. Although the lack of variety was troublesome, most women conceded that communist cosmetics had good ingredients. The major brands of Bulgarian-made cosmetics and perfumes under

communism were *Alen Mak*, *Aroma*, and *Bulgarska Rosa*. The women I interviewed remembered these products with great detail. Iolanta, a woman from Sofia in her mid-fifties explained:

There were two main cosmetics companies in Bulgaria: *Aroma* located in Sofia and *Alen Mak* located in Plovdiv. Sometimes their products had names like ‘Lemon’ or ‘Hydratant’, sometimes it was just ‘Facial crème of *Aroma*’ or ‘Hand cream of *Alen Mak*’ or just ‘Foot cream.’ It was the same with hair dye, facial lotion etc. There was a limited choice of Bulgarian items as the main producers were only two. There was not as big a choice of French perfumes and cosmetics as nowadays — Christian Dior, Nina Ricci, Lancôme — and some English and Italian, but there was a constant supply at the main shops. I remember in my childhood, my usual present for my mother’s name day was a Christian Dior perfume.

Bulgaria was unique among the Eastern Bloc countries in that the government had some standing barter arrangements with France for perfumes and cosmetics, so while there was a very limited supply of these goods and they were usually only available in the big cities, they could be found through official channels (i.e., not only on a black market) if you knew where to look for them. In fact, knowing where to find cosmetics was one way of combating the lack of variety. Most women agreed that the Mecca for cosmetics and perfumery in communist Bulgaria was TZUM, the central department store in Sofia that carried the widest variety of goods and many products imported from the West through the aforementioned barter agreements. Others told me of a large store called *Valentina* not far from TZUM in downtown Sofia. Both *Alen Mak* and *Aroma* had small shops around the country, and all of the bigger stores like *1001 Stoki* (1001 goods) or chain stores like *Narmag* had cosmetics counters. As in other East European countries, there were also the hard currency stores (called CORECOM in Bulgaria) that were only open to foreign diplomats and tourists and those high enough up in the communist hierarchy to have access to hard currency.

One could also get creams custom made by dermatologists. One younger woman recalled:

Cosmetic salons were very clean and cheap, operated by dermatologists, and the doctors made and sold their own ‘medicated’ creams. They were all organic and designed for your skin. I remember those well. They usually came in a non-descript plastic jar, all were scented with rose or lavender oil

and were runny. My mom would usually make me put on some of these creams after going to the beach. They were all very runny, but worked like a charm.

Other women remember creams like *Mladost* (Youth), *Neven* (Marigold) and “Cucumber Cream of *Aroma*.” *Norka* (Mink) was apparently a cream imported from Russia, *Florena* came from Hungary, and there was a Polish version of *Nivea*. Eastern Bloc perfumes that the women I interviewed remembered were Russian *duhi* (perfumes) imported into Bulgaria through barter agreements with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. A popular Bulgarian perfume was called *Chat Noire*, and *Bich Mozhe* and *Rococo* perfumes were imported from Poland. Ivana, a former party functionary in her early-sixties seemed to remember the contents and origins of her pre-1989 cosmetic bag clearly, “The good liquid make up was mostly imported from Eastern Germany. My powder compacts were Eastern German or Russian. The lipsticks were made by *Alen Mak* or *Aroma* in Bulgaria and were numbered rather than named. My perfume was always French, although I only used it on very special occasions.”

Although cosmetics made in Bulgaria were very cheap compared those imported from the West, the many women I interviewed were unanimous in agreeing that the quality and packaging were inadequate. A hairdresser in Sofia recalled, “First, the ingredients often separated in the jar, so you always had to mix them up. Then, lids might not close properly, so if you were not careful the cream would dry out.” A young professional woman in her early-thirties, Anelia, also explained one of the major drawbacks of Bulgarian perfumes: “The scent always changed very rapidly once it was sprayed on the body, and became an unpleasant one.” Indeed, my informants agreed that the most damning characteristic of almost all Bulgarian perfumes and cosmetics was their distinctive scent. When I asked why Bulgarian women did not like Bulgarian products, the answer was almost always the same: “They all smelled like *rosovo maslo* (rose oil)!” When I asked Anelia what made Bulgarian products inferior to Western ones — quality, packaging or scent — she replied, “All of these but mainly scent first. The scent of Bulgarian ones was usually the type nowadays we would qualify as a scent for elderly women.” Despite its exclusivity in the West, urban Bulgarian women were desperate to avoid it so as not to smell like their grandmothers. This tell-tale rose scent also let everyone around you know that you were using Bulgarian products, and it was the very “recognizability” of Bulgarian creams and perfumes that made

women long to distinguish themselves from each other by using the expensive Western brands.

In urban Bulgaria, most women I spoke with recalled that the ability to buy and use Western cosmetics and perfumes during communism was one of the most important markers of social status for both women and men. The women I interviewed who had been higher up in the communist hierarchy were connoisseurs of Western perfume scents. They judged people based on the way they smelled. It was not only that Western brands of cosmetics and perfumes were more expensive, but also that they were harder to acquire. As mentioned earlier, there were always some Western brands available in the stores that could be bought in *leva* (the Bulgarian currency), but the most exclusive and fashionable brands had to be purchased abroad, bought for hard currency in the CORECOM shops, or illegally acquired for an enormous sum on the black market. Since only the highest classes (in communist terms) of Bulgarians were allowed to travel abroad to capitalist countries, the majority of Bulgarians could only procure something from the West if they had a relative or close friend who was an airline stewardess or foreign trade representative. It was also difficult for ordinary Bulgarians to get a hold of hard currency to shop in the CORECOM stores. Only high-level bureaucratic functionaries had access to these well-stocked “diplomatic stores” which carried a wide variety of Western goods including alcohol, cigarettes, clothing and perfumes and cosmetics. The CORECOMs were ostensibly set up for the Western tourists or diplomats living in Bulgaria, but the so-called “red bourgeoisie” also benefited from their presence because they had the connections and hard currency necessary to shop there.

The consumption of the communist elite fueled the consumer desires of Bulgarians, particularly during the 1980s when Bulgaria’s command economy began to stagnate. The constant frustrations of not having consumer goods created a desire for the plenty available in the West. But the influence of the West should not be overestimated before 1989. Although the goods were coming from the capitalist countries, what was considered fashionable was very much determined locally. For instance, as in other East European countries, many Bulgarian women remembered that Kent Cigarettes enjoyed enormous popularity, but later learned that they were merely one of many popular brands in the West. The same was true of Western deodorant sprays. Anelia explained, “In the eighties they already sold the Western brands that we used. We mainly used deodorants rather than perfumes from brands that we considered prestigious, although we later on understood were only supermarket brands, like Rexona and Nivea.” Communist

citizens in Bulgaria were shielded from the normal mediums of brand indoctrination — privately owned print media or television. Western advertisers had few ways of reaching behind the Iron Curtain to convince people that one kind of perfume was better or more fashionable than another. The television, the newspapers, the magazines, the radio and even the foreign films that were allowed into Bulgaria were controlled by the state. They all presented one unified message about the superiority of the socialist system, and the benefits of living in a supposedly classless society. Toothpaste had no role in building the bright communist future. Of course, there were many ways in which alternative Western media did find its way into the communist world. In Romania, Denise Roman (2003) recalls that many Western videos were smuggled into the country by the *nomenclatura*⁴ throughout the 1980s. The same was true in Bulgaria and many of my interviewees also remembered listening to Radio Free Europe or having seen Western fashion magazines. But in general, the media were free from commercial advertising, and there was little to encourage the development of consumerist identities.

Ironically, it was the lifestyle of the communist elites that set the standard and the consumer privileges of this red bourgeoisie that urban Bulgarians aspired to emulate. These elites certainly did have more privileges than most Bulgarians, but it should not be forgotten that communist dogma severely restricted the extent of economic inequality. For instance, even a former Deputy Minister of Transportation explained to me that he was only allowed to have a certain number of rooms in his house, determined by how large his family was with one extra room allowed for his “office” because of his position. The import of luxury cars was controlled, and Western consumer goods were hard to find for everyone. Even if the goods were available in the CORECOM stores, hoarding too many accoutrements of the bourgeoisie might make your fellow comrades suspicious of your belief in the superiority of scientific communism. Furthermore, privilege was largely demonstrated through which resources you had access to (where you holidayed, where you went to university, where you lived, etc) rather than through consumption of major goods. Smaller items like perfumes, clothing or vinyl records marked the elites, things that most Bulgarians could afford to buy if they could get access to them. In short, the aspiration gap in Bulgaria before 1989 was rather small.

Post-socialism

The political and economic changes in Bulgaria all started on November 10th when Todor Zhivkov — the

country's communist leader for over 35 years — unexpectedly resigned. At the same time, 95% of the Bulgarian economy was still controlled by the state (Mladenova & Angresano, 1997:495). Although Bulgarians perceived November 10, 1989 as a milestone, in reality, the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) remained functionally in power albeit under a new name: the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). It was not until the Bulgarian economy imploded after bank failures and rampant hyperinflation that Bulgarians took to the streets en masse and demanded real political change. Thus, Bulgaria's real transition away from communism began in 1997.

Under communism, Bulgaria had been the European communist country that was most dependent on the Soviet Union and the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) trading bloc for its foreign trade (VICES, 1990). The “velvet revolutions” sweeping through Eastern Europe and the final disbandment of the CMEA in 1991 crushed the Bulgarian economy (VICES, 1990). Between 1989 and 1998, the Bulgarian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) lost more than a third of its value (World Bank, 1998). By 2003, per capita GDP had still not recovered up to 1989 levels and income polarization had increased (World Bank, 2003:141+234). A common measure of poverty is how much household income is spent on meeting basic caloric requirements. One study that focused on the middle class found that Bulgarians who considered themselves financially average spent 60.5% of their household budgets on food in December 2000 (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2001:113). With the majority of their incomes being spent on just feeding themselves, few Bulgarians had funds left over for other essential goods and services such as heating and electricity in the winter. The same report also found that 80% of those polled in December 2000 said that their incomes were less than what they considered for their necessary expenditures (UNDP, 2000).

The end of the central planning throughout the former socialist world and the opening up of previously closed economies brought a flood of Western goods into Eastern Europe, including cosmetics and perfumes. Demand for almost all communist-produced goods evaporated as Eastern Europeans initially embraced the overwhelming variety of Western products. Western companies rushed in to secure market share for their brands. The sudden availability of Western “stuff,” however, coincided with a precipitous decline in personal incomes and growing joblessness (NSI, 2001). When the products were finally available for the masses, the masses could not afford to buy them.

Heavy investment in advertising and marketing soon followed, and as I will explain later helped to fuel a surge in consumer spending for these goods.

These radical changes in economic status coincided with dramatic changes in gender relations as the newly “democratic” Bulgarian government abandoned its commitment to provide guaranteed employment for its citizens. Since environmental groups led the initial opposition to the communist regime in Bulgaria by protesting the high levels of industrial pollution (Cellarius and Ceadmon, 2002), post-socialist governments were pressured to close heavy industrial enterprises where mostly men were employed. These workers were redirected to previously feminized jobs in the light industries and services. At the same time, the new “democratic” state absolved Bulgarian citizens of their duty to work in the public sphere. Under communism, Bulgarian women had suffered under what has been called the “double burden” — that of being responsible for the family and for a full time job (Einhorn, 1993). Although mothers were given very generous maternity leave of up to 3 years, it was almost impossible for a woman to become a housewife or stay-at-home mom (Ghodsee, 2004). When women were finally given a choice, many freely left their jobs assuming that they could return to work later if they wanted to and that the state would continue to provide its generous social safety net (Gal & Kligman, 2000; Einhorn, 1993).

Once men began to enter the labor market for women's jobs and employment decisions were being made with an eye on generating private profits, employers had new incentives to discriminate against women. The very laws that once helped women to combine their productive and reproductive roles made them less competitive. The possibility of maternity and child-care leave in addition to frequent absences to tend to sick children meant that women could be seen as unreliable and expensive compared to men. Furthermore, long subdued patriarchal gender roles began to resurface. Since women were seen to have important responsibilities in the family, and had showed an initial preference for the home, employers could justify their discrimination against women workers by claiming that they had husbands to look after them. For those women who did not willingly leave their jobs, the post-1989 restructuring eventually hurt them because many sectors where women were employed were the most vulnerable to redundancies, primarily the bloated public sector (Ghodsee, 2005). Employment in this sector experienced a steady downward plunge throughout the 1990s. Women who lost their jobs in the public sector had a very difficult time finding new employment in the

emerging private sector. For the first time in their lives, there were not enough jobs to go around for the people who wanted to work. This scarcity of employment coincided with the fact that two incomes had now become necessary for most families to survive the hardships of transition.

In addition to the economic factors impacting gender relations, there were also many new social factors. Western ideals of femininity and womanhood were beginning to replace communist dogmas regarding the equality of the sexes. Fashion and beauty became two of the most important markers of femininity in post-socialist countries that had for so long defined women as workers and mothers (producers), without an emphasis on physical beauty. In her ethnography of a borderland village after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Daphne Berdahl (1999) showed how beauty and femininity were the most “visible signs of difference” (p. 202) between West and East German women. In urban Bulgaria, the women I interviewed claimed that striving to be young and beautiful after 1989 served multiple purposes. Some said it was a way to demonstrate personal liberation from communist mores. Others felt it was a way to actively show your approval of the new, “modern” culture of the West. Finally, according to one younger receptionist in Sofia, “You have to be good looking to get a job. Private companies do not want old, tired women.” Indeed, employment ads in newspapers began openly advertising for “young” and “attractive” women in the 1990s (Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, 1999).

For those who were not yet convinced of the necessity of looking good, a deluge of new private media was funded in part by fashion and cosmetic companies mounting slick and ubiquitous marketing campaigns. In the Czech Republic, Jacqui True (2003) has shown how the process of expanding consumer markets was “...promoted by the marketing of gender identities in global culture industries and consumer advertising (p. 103).” These gender identities in Bulgaria rode in on a wave of new cultural phenomena after 1989. In particular, they came in cultural forms such as an increased amount of television programming (including shows imported from the West), women’s magazines, commercial billboards, music videos, and the advertising associated with them.

The most significant of all of these cultural forms was the exponential growth in television programming and advertising available to Bulgarian viewers after the end of communism. The total number of hours of television programming increased from 6506 h in 1993 (NSI, 1999:315) to 395,369 h in 2000 (NSI, 2004:428), about

a 6000% increase. In terms of foreign programming, there were 2715 h of it in 1993 (NSI, 1999:315) and 128,615 h of it just 7 years later. The most shocking figure, however, (NSI, 2004:428) is the number of television hours dedicated to commercials. This category increased by 11,500% — from a mere 144 h a year in 1993 (NSI, 1999:315) to 16,698 h a year in 2000 (NSI, 2004:429). Prior to the end of communism, Bulgaria only had two television stations, Channels One and Two, which were run by the state. The increase in programming is largely due to the introduction of cable television. But even for Bulgarians who cannot afford cable or satellite television with its hundreds of channels, the country now has three network channels. Thus, the transition from communism to capitalism was also a transition from small amounts of state-controlled media to massive amounts of commercially driven programming. Preslava, a pensioner in Sofia, explained, “There is not a blank space left in the country. Everything is an advertisement: the trams, the street signs, the apartment blocs, even private cars!”

Nor have older women been spared from the onslaught of Western media and its new ideals of appropriate femininity. The staple of the new network television channels, which are watched widely throughout the country, is the dubbed Latin American soap opera. These serial shows from Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela have proven to be extremely popular with Bulgarians in almost all demographics. They chronicle the tumultuous lives of the superrich on the world’s most economically polarized continent. In these shows, it is not only the young who must be beautiful, but also middle aged and older women who are held up to high standards of personal grooming. In addition to their age appropriate but perfect appearances, there are also their luxurious homes and lifestyles, which are far beyond the means of ordinary Latin Americans let alone ordinary Bulgarians. In her work on the aspiration gap, Schor (1999) cites research that shows that those who watch dramatic shows, such as daytime soap operas, are more likely to have an inflated sense of what is a “normal” lifestyle compared to those who watch other genres of television (sports, news, etc). Since women in Bulgaria are the primary viewers of many of these new shows, women are also the most likely to be affected by them, and the particular ideals of femininity that they promote.

Commercial women’s magazines have also had an important role to play in shaping gender ideals, promoting consumerist identities, and fanning the proverbial flames of the aspiration gap. Before 1989, there was only one national women’s magazine, *Zhenata Dnes*, the editorial content of which was under complete

control of the government through the Committee for the Movement of Bulgarian Women, the communist mass women's organization.⁵ The magazine was started in 1945, and showcased women and their activities in building the bright socialist future. The editorial content varied but the magazine focused on how women could combine their roles as workers and mothers, and articles such as "The Family and Stress"⁶ or "Good night without Mama"⁷ helped to emphasize producerist identities for women. Buried within all of these articles were a few pages of the latest fashions, and often the magazine included a pattern that could be used to sew these designs. These fashion pages were usually toward the end of the magazine, and consisted of six or eight photos of fashion models. Even less prominent was the beauty advice section, which largely consisted of recipes for natural cosmetics using things from the kitchen or new hairstyle ideas. The magazine continued after 1989, but the first advertisement did not appear until March of 1991, and then it was only on the back cover. A year later, there were ads on the back cover and on the inside of the front and back cover, but it is not until 1993 that advertising appeared within the pages of the magazine.

After 1989, many new privately owned women's magazines began to appear on the newsstands. By 2004, the most popular women's titles were beauty and fashion magazines such as *Eva* (Eve), *Moda* (Fashion), *Bela* (Beauty), *Kosa i Stil* (Hair and Style), and a Bulgarian version of the American magazine *Cosmopolitan*. Their cover prices range from 6 leva for *Eva* to 3.20 leva for *Bela*, but most of the Bulgarian women I interviewed read these magazines in beauty salons or cafes. "I never buy them," said one university student, "but I read them all at the hairdresser." As with most commercial magazines, these publications are heavily dependent on advertising revenues. In all five of these magazines, cosmetics and perfumery make up the majority of the ads. Examining a sample of these five magazines from November 2004 demonstrated that for all of the magazines cosmetics and perfumery were a significant source of ad revenue, and in the case of three of the magazines this category contributed more than 50% of the magazines' full-page ads. The ads are typical in that they feature very young, thin, flawless women smiling, confident and often scantily clad, promoting a cosmetic product. This is perhaps normal in the West, but quite different from *Zhenata Dnes* where advertising had been non-existent. Anelia told me, "I know that it is an advertisement, but they are easy to believe because I want to believe them."

In addition to the ads in women's magazines, most major cities in Bulgaria are plagued with an epidemic of

commercial billboards and posters for L'Oreal, Clinique, Revlon, and Nivea among many, many others. Advertising on the Internet, which many urban Bulgarian women use on a regular basis, is ubiquitous. Even in the supermarket, women are often confronted with a wall of cosmetics together with promotional literature. Unless you live in total isolation in a village without electricity, not a day can go by without you somehow seeing or hearing about some miracle product that will erase fine lines by 37%.

Twenty-four-hour music video channels like City TV, Hit TV and Planeta, especially for Bulgarian "turbo-folk" music, are also important sites where new beauty standards are being disseminated. These music videos often feature female vocalists in provocative and expensive clothes with full make-up and perfect bodies singing about money and the pleasures of the "good things" in life. Love, heartbreak and consumerism are the staple of the lyrics of many of the songs, and beauty and seduction are the suggested avenues for attaining a luxurious lifestyle. In particular, this genre of music became very popular with Bulgaria's new aspiring class of super-rich, and has fueled a cottage plastic surgery industry in the big cities. "No one can be that thin with breasts that big!" explained Evelina, a hairdresser. "I could be that beautiful if I had that money."

After 1989, Bulgarians witnessed the creation of a new class of violent elites: the Mafia. The Bulgarian mob got its money and power both by ransacking the post-communist state and by illegally running arms and fuel to Serbia during the embargo in the mid-1990s (Nikolov, 1997). The aesthetic they preferred and promoted was garish and excessive, what Roman (2003:39) has called "post-communist carnivalesque" in Romania and Bulgarians called "mobster baroque." The girlfriends of these mobsters were called *mutressi*, and they began to set the standard of femininity to which young girls would aspire. The hallmarks of the *mutressi* were extreme thinness, youth, beauty and fashionable clothing, and most of my informants had a kind of love/hate relationship to these women, who for the most part do not work, but shop all day and party at the most fashionable clubs all night. If they do work, they work as models or escorts in Sofia. Their lifestyle is ostentatious and their consumption conspicuous — \$3000 Hermes hand bags can be seen on the arms of seventeen-year-old girls when both her parents' pensions put together do not equal more than \$60 a month.

All of these factors combined to promote a new ideal of femininity in society that made perfume and cosmetics a necessity for surviving in the new post-

socialist reality. Of course, this process had begun under communism, especially in the late 1980s when more and more Western goods had become available. And women had never stopped caring about their appearance. But it was the intensity and ubiquity of the pressure to conform to an unrealistic ideal that marked the post-1989 era. Perhaps because of this pressure, spending on cosmetics and perfumery significantly exceeded growth in incomes during critical years of the transition. Between 1997 and 2002, the average per capita household income increased by 71% (NSI, 1999:92, 2001:100, 2004:108) and the average annual wages for employees under labor contracts grew by 63% (NSI, 1999:243, 2001:235, 2004:364). At the same time, however, spending on perfumes and cosmetics grew by 130%, significantly more than for most other categories of goods (NSI, 1999:243, 2001:335, 2004:364). To meet this demand, the number of shops nation-wide dedicated solely to the sale of perfume and cosmetics increased from 1515 in 1996 (NSI, 1999:241) to 2507 in 2002 (NSI, 2004:364), a 65% increase. This figure does not include pharmacies or beauty salons that probably sell the most cosmetics, nor does it include the increased number of general goods stores, supermarkets, discount warehouse stores, gas stations, and companies such as Avon, Amway or Oriflame that sell products directly to women. Avon Bulgaria alone had 35,000 representatives selling Avon products in almost every town and village in 2005.⁸ In 2006, Oriflame started the year with over 25,000 distributors, of whom 95% were women.⁹

The table demonstrates that spending on cosmetics and perfumery (a relatively narrow category of goods) increased faster than several other categories of goods that might have also been expected to rise as Bulgarians had more disposable income. In particular, the spending on goods that urban men generally favor in Bulgaria — home entertainment equipment and suits — did not increase as fast as spending on cosmetics. Furthermore, although the absolute amounts are smaller for perfume and cosmetics, it is the percentage increase that is more important because of the relative cheapness of shampoo or toothpaste compared to television sets or refrigerators. These numbers beg the question: why would spending on this particular category of goods so significantly outstrip spending in others?(Table 1)¹⁰

“Producerist” and “Consumerist” identities

The answer to this question may lie in part in the particular gendering of the aspiration gap in the post-socialist context, the confluence of circumstances surrounding the economic transition and the gradual shift in

Table 1
Percent change from 1997 to 2002 in retail sales in US dollars

Category of goods	Total US dollar sales in 1997	Total US dollar sales in 2002	Percent increase (%)
Perfumery and cosmetics	36,666,240	84,391,429	130
Household articles	31,441,488	67,389,985	111
Household appliances	57,372,118	121,081,367	114
Radios and TV sets	42,508,841	60,950,890	43
Clothing and fur goods	205,159,024	256,440,539	25
Footwear	119,401,334	141,887,337	19
Meat and meat products	281,001,543	318,895,040	14

Source: NSI, *Statisticheski Godishnik* (1999, 243), NSI, *Statisticheski Godishnik* (2001, 335), NSI, *Statisticheski Godishnik* (2004, p. 364).

what the economic geographer, Michael Storper (2001), has called “producerist” and “consumerist” identities among urban Bulgarian men and women. Prior to the onset of globalization in the United States and Western Europe, individual identities were primarily shaped by what people produced through employment in the formal economy. Vocation was the basis of the “producerist” identity, and personal satisfaction was intimately bound with satisfaction at work and making a “good” living. As domestic economies became more integrated into the global economy, international competition began to put downward pressure on wages. At the same time, however, the introduction of labor saving technologies, deregulation, privatization, outsourcing and free trade, while devastating for many workers, have lowered the prices of most goods and services. This process has led to the creation of what Storper calls a “consumer surplus.” Although wages and benefits are falling and jobs are scarcer and less stable, people are still able to buy more. The existence of this consumer surplus is why few American or Western Europeans have challenged the erosion of the workers’ position under globalization. Even though their incomes are smaller, global capitalism allows them to consume more with less money.

The introduction of cheaper and higher quality imports in one category of goods fuels consumer demands for cheaper and higher quality imports in other categories, and manufacturers are able to introduce more labor saving technology or, in the Western case, move production abroad in order to satisfy the consumer demands. Slowly, individual workers facing redundancy or settling for lower skilled jobs abandon their “producerist” identities as workers and embrace “consumerist” identities as shoppers, whereby self worth is increasingly reflected more in what you buy rather than

in what you do. As the “consumerist” identity eclipses the “producerist” one, men and women focus more on material objects as symbols of their own worth, and Schor’s (1999) aspiration gap begins to take hold. For it is not only the quantity of things that matters, but the quality of goods. When we have consumerist identities, our possessions are the status markers that let the world know where we stand in the hierarchy of wealth, power, and influence. The higher we wish to climb, the more we must buy. Furthermore, according to Schor (1999), societies that are economically dependent on consumer spending fuel the aspiration gap through the media, direct advertising and constant product innovation. The amount of stuff needed to be considered “normal” steadily increases even as average wages may be falling. In order to keep up, individuals feel compelled to buy the latest, newest goods, particularly things that can be openly displayed to others.

Taking this model and applying it to Bulgaria sheds some light on the effects that the economic transition has had on shaping individual subjectivities. Under communism, both men and women had very strong “producerist” identities; male and female subjectivities in the public sphere were primarily determined by occupation and membership in the communist party. Although communist subjects certainly used consumption as a way to create alternative and sometimes even subversive identities, their primary identity in society was associated with their workplace. Where you lived, where you holidayed, where you went to the hospital, etc was all determined by the state enterprise that employed you. When communism collapsed in 1989 and Bulgaria’s economy was pried open by globalization, unemployment climbed, wages fell, and state benefits disappeared as economic restructuring closed down many Bulgarian industries (Kalinova and Baeva, 2002; Giatzidis, 2002). At the same time, Bulgaria was flooded with cheap imported consumer goods. But unlike in the United States, the introduction of global competition and free markets in Bulgaria caused prices for most things to rise rather than fall. Thus, while there was a consumer surplus available for some goods and services, there was a considerable consumer deficit for others.

In Bulgaria, the distribution of the consumer surplus and deficit broke down along gendered lines. The changes brought about by the onset of capitalism allowed many of the urban women I interviewed to shift away from their “worker” identities. “It was a pleasure not to have to work,” said Iolanta, who left her job in the early 1990s to look after her two young children and who was lucky enough to have a husband with a large enough salary to support them all. This

breadwinner–housewife model (although an idealized one that was only really available to the upper-middle classes) re-emerged in Bulgaria at the exact same historical moment when Western companies were attempting to expand consumer markets for their goods. The media, advertising, and new tropes of femininity supported the idea that women were primarily consumers for the first time. These tropes became essentialized as natural difference between men and women. Women like Anelia, Iolanta, Violeta, and Ivana were all very happy at the sudden availability of things from the West and initially embraced consumerism before they realized that the onset of free markets would have its price. Violeta explained, “I thought we would have our normal things [heat, water, electricity, education, healthcare, etc] and all of these goods in addition.” But of course, this was not to be as women had to make tough choices between meeting their basic needs and enjoying the new consumer plenty.

The rise of the new gender roles also had important implications for the types of goods and services that men and women bought. As the state retreated from its paternalistic role, the new breadwinner ideal encouraged men to look after their families in lieu of the communist government. Discursively, men became responsible for all of the basic costs associated with living previously subsidized or provided by the government. Women, on the other hand, were freed from their responsibilities as workers and allowed to leave the labor force at will under the assumption that they would be taken care of by their fathers or husbands (Gal & Kligman, 2000). Of course, men were targeted as consumers as well, but not to the extent that women were.

Before 1989, there were very minimal costs associated with heat, water, electricity, food, education, health care and other essential goods and services. As free markets for these goods and services were created, cost recovery and profits incentives drove the prices of health care, schooling, housing and utilities up. Relative to the communist period, the cost of the basic things like water, electricity, heat, and education that “good” men were now at least discursively responsible for providing grew considerably. On the other hand, the costs of goods that the communists had deemed inessential — such as imported perfume and cosmetics — actually fell relative to the previous period. Global competition also vastly increased the variety of consumer goods available.

Thus, for the types of goods for which women were now being encouraged to consume — consumer goods such as clothing, footwear, household appliances, and cosmetics and perfumery, there was a consumer surplus. This consumer surplus, coupled with the media

messages freeing women from the imperative of formal employment and bombarding them with feminine ideals that prioritize physical beauty and the ownership of beautiful things, contributed to a gradual shift in many Bulgarian women's identity away from the "producerist" pole and toward the "consumerist" one. Alternatively, the consumer deficit for housing, utilities, food stuffs, education and health care (things men are now expected to provide for in lieu of the state) has forced many men to stay closer to the "producerist" pole of identity as they struggle to find well paid and stable employment to support their families. This is not to say that Bulgarian men have not become consumers as well, but rather that "successful masculinity" in Bulgaria is first about a man's occupation and income level, and only second about how he looks or what he owns. Furthermore, I do not believe that women have completely lost their producerist identities — many urban women still work and their consumerist identities have become an essential part of their producerist lives in terms of having to look good to find work, an interesting contradiction that deserves further observation. Nor am I trying to make gross generalizations about all urban men and all urban women, certainly there are some men who are far closer to the consumerist pole of identity than many women. However, in the aggregate I would argue that urban women tend to fall closer to the consumerist pole than men. Finally, if having a primarily "consumerist" identity makes one more susceptible to the influence of Schor's aspiration gap, then women in Bulgaria may spend more on goods that will demonstrate their status under a new system that values individual feminine worth based on her looks.

Since Western cosmetics and perfumes were so scarce and highly sought-after under communism, it should be no surprise that women have embraced the new variety of products and price points available.¹¹ Furthermore, as we have seen, the influence of the private media has placed a strong emphasis on women's beauty, and success in the labor market may be linked to physical attractiveness. Appearance and personal grooming are also very visible signs of whether or not a woman can afford to "take care of herself," and whether or not she has repudiated the "ugliness" of communist egalitarian gender roles. Moreover, perfumes and cosmetics are relatively inexpensive and expendable. A woman does not have to make a major investment to change the color of her hair, the shade of her eye shadow or nail polish, or the way she smells to others. The cheapness of these goods is very important given that there is a lack of consumer credit available to fuel the "competitive acquisition" that follows from

consumerist identities and a growing aspiration gap (Schor, 1998). As of 2002, there were only about 50,000 credit cards in all of Bulgaria,¹² and although this number is rising, Bulgaria is still largely a cash based society. Thus, unlike in the United States where consumerist identities and the aspiration gap lead to high levels of personal indebtedness, in Bulgaria women cannot yet spend that far beyond their means. There may actually be greater demand for goods other than perfumes and cosmetics, but women may not be able to pay for them in cash. As credit cards become more widely available in Bulgaria, spending on other categories of consumer non-durables may see a dramatic growth. But for now, Bulgarian women may have to settle for performing their new feminine identity through their potions, lotions and lipsticks.

I would like to end by saying that there is nothing inherently "wrong" with spending money on perfume and cosmetics, and I wish to pass no moral judgments on Bulgarian women who enjoy pampering themselves and experimenting with new and different products. In fact, psychologists Heather Bullock and Julian Fernald (2003) found that even young women in the United States who identify themselves as feminists were more responsive to female public speakers who wore make-up and had styled hair than they were to those who went bare-faced with their hair slicked back. But in a society that is becoming more and more intolerant of the unbeautiful, there is tremendous pressure being placed upon women and especially girls to conform to an unrealistic feminine ideal that did not exist in Bulgaria as recently as 15 years ago.

And this feminine ideal is not only being used to sell clay masques and hair gel; it is also implicated in marketing a wide variety of goods and services that were once considered unnecessary or frivolous under socialism. As the aspiration gap continues to grow, there is no doubt that "new and improved" beauty standards and gender ideals in the popular media will be used to expand product markets and increase consumerism as the memory of socialist egalitarianism fades ever further into the seemingly irretrievable past. While this is certainly beneficial for the domestic and transnational corporations specializing in the production of these goods, their value to materially improving the lives of Bulgarian women remains rather questionable.

On the one hand, just as women "dressed up" to avoid the drabness of Soviet communism, so too may some women in Bulgaria be participating in the consumption of these goods in order to escape the harsh realities of capitalism. On the other hand, some women may be strategically using these goods in order to

promote their producerist identities once again. Women are aware of the new beauty standards and accept them as a way to get ahead in a competitive labor market. Either way, there still exists “the manipulation inherent in the fashion and cosmetic industries” as the media and advertisers promote an almost unattainable ideal of Bulgarian beauty to sell more mascara. To counter the Drakulic quote at the start of this article, in this age of rampant global capitalism and unprecedented market expansion, maybe even the “Bangladeshis” need to start worrying about their cholesterol.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Jennifer Scanlon, Elaine Weiner, Anne Clifford, Elissa Helms, Christian Filipov, Maria Stoilkova, Sirma and Ivan Kozarev, and Genevieve Creedon for their helpful comments on different drafts of this manuscript. I also want to acknowledge the research support of grants that I received from the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), Fulbright, the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER), UC Berkeley, and the Fletcher Family Fund at Bowdoin College. I am also grateful to the many Bulgarian women who shared their thoughts and experiences with me over the years. This is a shortened version of a much longer paper, and the author welcomes questions and comments at kghodsee@bowdoin.edu.

Endnotes

¹ A Swedish direct marketing cosmetics company that is similar to the American company “Avon.”

² This example is based on older Bulgarian women’s perceptions of how the communist planners did things, and grounded in interviews that I conducted with former state planners that had once been responsible for other sectors of the economy before 1989.

³ All names have been changed.

⁴ The nomenclatura is a word used to refer to the communist elite (or the bourgeois as they were often called); those who had special privileges under communism due to their position within the communist party.

⁵ I was able to look at over 100 back issues of *Zhenata Dnes* from 1953–1959 and from 1982–1994.

⁶ Dimitur Vassilev, “The Family and Stress,” (in Bulgarian), *Zhenata Dnes*, February 1984, p. 36.

⁷ “Good night without Mama” (in Bulgarian) *Zhenata Dnes*, April 1982, p. 6.

⁸ Information on Avon Bulgaria from: <http://www.amcham.bg/cgi-bin/e-cms/vis/vis.pl?n=001055&p=0013>, Access date, February 10, 2005.

⁹ Personal e-mail communication with Milen Konkalov, Oriflame Sales Manager in March 2006.

¹⁰ The problem with these figures is that it is hard to discern exactly which Bulgarian women are doing the spending. Are all Bulgarian women (and some men of course) increasing the amount of money they

spend on perfume and cosmetics? Or is this dramatic increase in the spending of the top 10% hiding a stagnation or decline in spending in the bottom 90%? Unfortunately, the National Statistical Institute does not disaggregate this data by income deciles. Based on my fieldwork, I propose that this spending largely occurs to urban women.

¹¹ If we look at Table 1, we see that spending for cosmetics and perfumery, household articles, and household appliances all increased more than 100% between 1997 and 2002. These are all goods associated with women’s new domestic and feminine role in society as well as goods that are much cheaper and more available now than they were under communism (i.e., where there is a consumer surplus). In the other categories that I have listed, spending has also increased, but clothing, shoes, TVs, radios, and meat were readily available under communism and often at subsidized prices. Thus, they lack the social cache associated with goods that were once scarce under communism, nor is the consumer surplus for these goods as large as it is for the top three categories.

¹² “JCB and Bulgaria’s Transcard Sign License Agreements for Merchant Acquiring and Operations, Card Issuing” JCB Press Release, October, 29, 2004. Available online at: <http://www.jcbinternational.com/html/about/releases/20041029.htm>, Access date: February 10, 2005.

References

- Bebel, August (1904). *Woman and socialism*. New York: Labor News Press.
- Berdahl, Daphne (1999). *Where the world ended: Re-unification and identity in the German Borderland*. Berkeley: UC Press.
- Bullock, Heather, & Femald, Julian (2003). ‘Feminism lite?’ Feminist identification, speaker appearance, and perceptions of feminist and antifeminist messages. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 27, 291–299.
- Cellarius, Barbara, & Straddon, Caedmon (2002). Environmental nongovernmental organizations, civil society, and democratization in Bulgaria. *East European Politics and Societies*, 16(1), 182–222.
- Drakulic, Slavenka (1991). *How we survived communism and even laughed*. New York: HarperPerennial.
- Einhorn, Barbara (1993). *Cinderella goes to market: Citizenship, gender, and women's movements in East Central Europe*. London: Verso.
- Engels, Frederick (1972). *Origin of the family, private property and the state*. New York: Pathfinder Press.
- Etcoff, Nancy (2000). *Survival of the prettiest: The science of beauty*. New York: Random House, Inc.
- Gal, Susan, & Kligman, Gail (2000). *The politics of gender after socialism: A comparative-historical essay*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ghodsee, Kristen (2004). Red nostalgia? Communism, women’s emancipation, and economic transformation in Bulgaria. *L'Homme. Zeitschrift für Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft*, 15(1).
- Ghodsee, Kristen (2005). *The Red Riviera: Gender, tourism and postsocialism on the Black Sea*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Giatzidis, Emile (2002). *An introduction to postcommunist Bulgaria: Political, economic, and social transformation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Gray, Francine du Plessix (1989). *Soviet women: Walking the tightrope*. New York: Doubleday.
- Hessler, Julie (2004). *A social history of Soviet trade: Trade policy, retail practice, and consumption, 1917–1953*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kalinova, Eugenia, & Baeva, Iskra (2002). *Bulgarskite Prehodi 1939–2002 (The Bulgarian Transitions, 1939–2002)*. Sofia: Paradigma.

- Kollontai, Alexandra (1997). *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai* (edited and translated by Alix Holt.). Westport, CT: L. Hill.
- Lampe, John (1986). *The Bulgarian economy in the twentieth century*. London: Croom Helm.
- Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (1999). *Sex discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace in Bulgaria*. Minneapolis: Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights.
- Mladenova, Zoya, & Angresano, James (1996). Privatization in Bulgaria. *East European Quarterly*, 30(4), 495–515.
- National Statistical Institute [NSI] (1999). *Statisticheski Godishnik (Statistical Yearbook) 1998*. Sofia: NSI.
- NSI (2001). *Statisticheski Godishnik 2000*. Sofia: NSI.
- NSI (2004). *Statisticheski Godishnik 2003*. Sofia: NSI.
- NSI (2005). *Domakinstvata v Republika Bulgaria (Household Budgets in the Republic of Bulgaria)*. Sofia: NSI.
- Nikolov, Jovo (1997). Crime and corruption after communism: Organized crime in Bulgaria. *Eastern European Constitutional Review*, 6(4).
- Roman, Denise (2003). *Fragmented Identities: Popular Culture, Sex, and Everyday Life in Postcommunist Romania*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Rowman and Littlefield.
- Schor, Juliet (1999). *The overspent American: Why we want what we don't need*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Schor, Juliet (1998). Keeping up with the Trumps. *Washington Monthly*, 30(7/8), 34–38.
- Storper, Michael (2001). Lived effects of the contemporary economy: Globalization, inequality, and consumer society. In Jean Comaroff, & John Comaroff (Eds.), *Millennial capitalism and the culture of neoliberalism* (pp. 88–124). Durham: Duke University Press.
- True, Jacqui (2003). *Gender globalization and postsocialism: The Czech Republic after communism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2000). *National Human Development Report: The Municipal Mosaic*. Sofia: UNDP <http://www.undp.bg/publications.php?id=1168>
- United Nations Development Program [UNDP] (2001). *Annual early warning report 2000*. Sofia: UNDP.
- Verdery, Katherine (1996). *What was socialism and what comes next?* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University.
- Vienna Institute for Comparative Economics [VICES] (1990). *CO-MECON Data 1989*. New York: Greenwood.
- World Bank (1998). *World Development Report 1998/1999: Knowledge for Development*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- World Bank (2003). *World Development Report 2002: Building Institutions for Markets*. New York: Oxford University Press.