

**Summaries of Selected Sessions from the  
2008 AMA Winter Educators' Conference  
(Austin, TX)**

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## 7.5 Consumer Psychology and Behavior (Special Session)

### **Triangulating on Stigma: Consumer, Salesperson and Product**

#### Chair:

*Paula Bone, West Virginia University*

#### Discussant:

*Ronald P. Hill, Villanova University*

#### Participants:

Consumer Characteristics as Embodied Stigmata

*Natalie Ross Adkins, Creighton University*

Stigma and Salespeople

*John Andy Wood, West Virginia University*

The Dimensions and Implications of Product Stigma

*Pam Ellen, Georgia State University*

*Paula Bone, West Virginia University*

**Session Summary Writer:** Garrett Coble, Oklahoma State University

Session 7.5 was about various stigmas that exist. It dealt with stigma on three levels: The Consumer, Salesperson and Product.

Natalie Adkins opened with a presentation on how stigma becomes associated with identity. She discussed how certain situations can heighten stigmas. She reviewed the definition of stigma as a targeted mechanism where stereotypes are tied to identity. She discussed how some stigmas are less visible than others and how some people try to hide the stigma they may have. She gave an example of a mom from another country who accidentally gave vulgar valentines to kids and how that experience strengthened that stigma through the product. She concluded with a reminder that stigmas impact product choices.

The second presentation was by Andy Wood. He explored whether salespeople were stigmatized against. He discussed how the salesperson role is generally transparent. He noted that there is “ample evidence” that salespeople are stigmatized against. In a study looking at outcome based management, he found that awareness of stigmas among salespeople lead to lower self-reported effort but that managers’ support affects that relationship. He concluded with a suggestion that further research be done in this area.

The third presentation was done by Pam Ellen. She took stigmas a step further to discuss how it functions in the realm of products. She used genetically modified organisms (GMOs) as her context. She reminded the audience that GMOs have been found by scientists to be harmless, but warned that a stigma might still exist. She suggests that a stigma may be created by anti-GMO legislation, newspaper articles, and other negative media. Pam reminded us that GMOs may be stigmatized due to being seen as: 1. negative, 2. attributed to entity with conflicted interest (Government may be lying about safety of product), 3. Immoral, 4. Inflated risks, 5. and with uncertainty. Several questions followed and an interesting discussion took place of how we define stigma.