The use of chemicals in the home and their gradual displacement by branded products between the 1930s and 1980s is largely unexplored.

Crucial to understanding the lay public’s interaction with science in the 20th Century.

Introduction of branded chemicals between the 1930s-1980s

Especially branded household chemicals in a British context, interacting with chemicals on an everyday basis, in many practical ways.

Main relevant literature is on chemistry sets but this is a small part of a bigger picture.

Up to the Second World War, unbranded chemicals were used in the home for a variety of purposes

Cleaning

Pest eradication

Experimentation

Photography

Between 1930’s and 1960s these were displaced by new branded goods which appeared on shop and supermarket shelves, ranging from cleaning agents, washing powders, shampoos and dyes through to medical products and garden products such as pesticides and fertilisers.

Presented as more convenient, effective and safer alternatives to homemade *(home mixed?*)products

Advertising presented these as symbols of a better future\*\*

1960’s tide turned against chemicals, e.g. Silent Spring, Thalidomide, Vietnam War, Agent Orange, environmental disasters, CFCs. But complex origins and varied by national context. Manufacturers changed formulae and marketing.

Governmental trust in the public’s use of unformulated chemicals declined – safety, abuse, terrorism. Made freely available chemicals difficult to buy and knowledge about their use withered away.

Research questions may include:

Which chemicals were used in the home, how and why did they change over time?

How were the new branded household products introduced and marketed in the 30s-60s?

Who used these chemicals?

As users changed, did their uses change and did these differ between groups?

What were the users knowledge and view of the nature effectiveness and safety of these new products and how did attitudes towards these branded chemical products change over time?

How did mfcrs respond to this shift in attitude? How did they adapt their marketing strategies to new users and new uses in the 70’s and 80s?

Chemicals could more easily be mixed and experimented with (compared to electricity) within the private space of the home, until they were displace by newer branded chemicals.

Chemicals have different meanings attached to them depending on who their users are: whether consumers, manufacturers, retailers, campaigners or regulators.

The chemicals and branded products will be categorised according to their end use. Categories may include cooking products, cleaning agents, laundry agents, textile and hair dyes, products for personal hygiene, pesticides, fertilisers, medical products such as iodine (but excluding pharmaceutical drugs) photographic chemicals and chemicals for play and home experimentation.

**Familiarise self with up-to-date scholarship on social and economic significance of brands and co-construction of users and technology.**

**Select 4 categories of study – 2 should be likely to show gender differences.**

Accumulated evidence on the chemicals from the perspective of both the supplier and the users, examining the nature, formulation and marketing of these chemicals and investigating the users’ age and gender differences.

**Training in techniques and research methods.**

Archival research

Database analysis of chemicals and branded produce used in the home for quantitative analysis *Does this mean I produce a database of chemicals and the branded products, or that I uses existing (which?) databases?*

Oral histories – 16 (8m 8f) from North and South. *I suppose this is a manageable sample size, will have to make the*

Training – Nvivo software, oral history for academic purposes (Institute of Historical Research)

Join? – Oral history society?

*Get a copy of Emily’s thesis and read it – how will this consumer experience of electricity inform my work?*

Historical Group of the Royal Society of Chemistry – newsletter, workshops.

SHAC (Society for the History of Chemistry)- John Perkins

Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising. *Do we have a named contact there? Or do I have to start this from scratch?*

Science Museum *Peter Morris*

Year 2:

Receive induction at Science Museum. Focus on who were the users of chemicals in the home, paying particular attention to age and gender differences. Public appeal for donations of recipe and home lab notebooks, organise around 16 oral histories (2 trips, about 4 days each) of people aged between 60-90.

Year 3:

Writes dissertation, co-organise and exhibit and public demonstration at the Science Museum and/or Museum of Brands. Produce an exhibition booklet and impact questionnaire.

Produce a short book on the subject of chemicals in the home in collaboration with supervisors as well as scholar / pop article e.g. in the journals Science and Education

Oral presentations during the CDA

Publish scholarly and pop articles afterwards

Shire Books?

Series of public demonstrations with household chemicals in collaboration with Dr Andrea Sella of UCL.

Web products – museum microsites/ exhibition / oral hist extracts?

This is not about:

Labour saving appliances

Development of American market, mass consumption and advertising in the US. *Check this with Viviane – advertising and public relations in the UK alright?*

Exposure to chemicals in the fabric of the home, so not lead paint, not asbestos products. These are one-off installations, although they do have long reaching consequences. They are not ‘used’ in the same way that the other chemicals are.