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# Styling Masculinity: Gender, Class, and Inequality in the Men's Grooming Industry

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even-handed account of these debates and pays an equal amount of attention to each side.

Of course, no book can do everything, and there are questions this study does not address. While food politics, that is gastropolitics, is analyzed in great detail in both countries, the same is not true for food nationalism, that is gastronationalism. *Contested Tastes* describes in much detail how foie gras is perceived as typically French in France, but the opportunity to address the reverse question—what role the imagination of this food item as typically French plays in the United States—is passed by. How do American farmers, chefs, and consumers imagine what it means to eat French food? The cultural imagination of self and other through food emerges by default as something that seems to be a peculiarly French affair.

Still, *Contested Tastes* stands not only as one of the best accounts of food politics but also as an example of how to blend together multiple sources of data into a compelling analysis of how identities are made and moral arguments are fought. In this way, the book enriches our sociological thinking not only about food but also about the way cultural symbols are produced and interpreted in the interaction between markets, politics, and social movements.

*Styling Masculinity: Gender, Class, and Inequality in the Men's Grooming Industry*. By Kristen Barber. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2016. Pp. xiv + 240. \$90.00 (cloth); \$27.95 (paper).

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Kristen Barber's engaging book, *Styling Masculinity*, begins by briefly outlining the history of men's beauty products through the stories of her father and brother in relation to the rise of the metrosexual man and the recent widespread availability of such products. In her case study of men's salons as key sites for the marketing of men's beauty, Barber deftly weaves together sociological theories of gender, embodiment, beauty, and service work in a thoughtful analysis of the selling of masculinity through relationships between men customers and women stylists in the context of an industry historically defined in feminine terms.

In the introduction, Barber eloquently lays out the puzzling nature of men's beauty. She situates her study as a bridge across the sociologies of consumption, service work, bodies, emotions, spaces, and symbolic interactionism while at the same time employing an intersectional analysis of the workings of race, class, and gender in the marketing of men's beauty. This is an ambitious setup that Barber employs beautifully throughout her book to argue that the beauty products and practices for men become valuable as markers of class privilege through carefully crafted performances of heterosexual femininity enacted in the service interactions in grooming salons.

The greatest strength of this book is Barber's extension of theories of body work through four key conceptual themes: "the specter of homosociality," "heterosexual aesthetic labor," "touching rules," and "occupational choice narratives" (pp. 19, 20). These concepts extend existing theories of gendered embodiment and labor through a detailed analysis of both the rules that structure interactions in the salon and the meaning making accomplished by stylists to explain a performance of femininity that could, at first glance, be interpreted as demeaning.

After a succinct history of the cosmetic industry generally and men's beauty products more specifically, Barber introduces the specter of homosociality as an explanatory concept to understand the complex work that goes into creating men's salons as masculine spaces. Although these salons present a gentleman's club aesthetic, men are carefully shielded from one another to limit interactions in order to conceal men's beauty practices. Barber observes that the creation of a masculine atmosphere is not achieved through the interactions with men but rather is made possible through the labor of the women who work in these spaces. Barber shows us that these women are essential to creating a particular heteronormative masculinity for men to consume and embody.

Given this understanding of masculine spaces being created through the labor of women, in chapter 3 Barber focuses on the ways in which women stylists, who project a highly feminine and heterosexual embodiment, secure the heteromale identities and bodies of clients. Barber explains that through heterosexual aesthetic labor, women salon employees become situated as "interpersonal tools by which clients project heteromale identities while engaging in largely feminized consumer habits" (pp. 78–79). The contrast to traditional, women-centered salons is used by Barber to highlight the ways in which men's grooming is not strictly about beauty but about a particular ideal of masculinity that requires an emphasized heteronormative feminine body labor to help men embody that ideal. Because beauty practices are associated with femininity, when men engage in this body work, women stylists are necessary to create distance between men and femininity, thus shoring up the masculinity of clients.

Chapter 4 serves to specify the mechanisms through which heterosexual aesthetic labor occurs. Here, Barber explains the touching rules that govern stylists' interactions with clients. These rules determine who can touch whom and how. Men stylists, for example, will not give men clients head massages, while women stylists do. These touching rules establish women stylists as gatekeepers to the heteronormative aesthetic that men expect from the salon experience.

Although these theoretical insights may give the impression that women are merely tools or objects in these salons, in chapter 5 Barber is careful to narrate and analyze the meaning-making that women stylists do within spaces that value only specific expressions of femininity. This chapter centers on the ways in which women stylists understand their work in both men's and women's salons and how this labor relates to their identities.

Most importantly, Barber understands these occupational choice narratives as powerful critiques of masculinity, as examples of the ways in which women are active in the production of masculinity, and allow us to “imagine women who practice or embody masculinity” (p. 160). This is balanced by practices that “reify conventional femininity” (p. 160). This chapter shows the power women have in controlling their narratives of work and in threatening structures of male dominance even as they work within some of its structures. Furthermore, Barber argues that these narratives not only reflect the imperatives of cultural meanings about gender, but can reinforce, resist, and manipulate them in order to navigate a particular social setting.

*Styling Masculinity* succeeds at unifying a wide range of theoretical traditions to add to existing sociological analyses of gender, embodiment, and service work. Barber’s intersectional analysis, while strong on interpreting gender and class dynamics, could be stronger in the incorporation of race and sexuality. Barber carefully explains that a focus on upper-class white salons tells a particular story about privilege, and in the conclusion she makes a point to wonder about how these patterns play out across other social locations. Although her analysis smoothly considers the intersections of class and gender, more could have been done to explore the importance of “whiteness” in these social spaces. More could have been made of the race of the stylists and the underlying assumptions about what kind of femininity is needed to bolster certain forms of masculinity. Despite these critiques, this book is essential reading for scholars of labor, gender, and embodiment. It is also a stunning example of strong ethnographic methods and useful as a teaching tool for undergraduate students, as Barber clearly explains her research design and neatly ties together a variety of theoretical frameworks in a well-written exploration of timely topics of gender, sexuality, and class at work.

*Artifacts and Allegiances: How Museums Put the Nation and the World on Display.* By Peggy Levitt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015. Pp. x+244. \$29.95.

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Peggy Levitt’s intriguing study, *Artifacts and Allegiances: How Museums Put the Nation and the World on Display*, focuses on how the museum professionals, who build, curate, and manage elaborate museum displays around the globe, are constructing variegated new understandings of both the nation and the world. Levitt’s analysis of cosmopolitan cultural networks tied together through museums develops an important analysis of museum politics, economics, and aesthetics today. Following paths blazed by Benedict Anderson, Tony Bennett, and Selma Hollo, Levitt’s aspirations in this volume are to account for “how museums put the nation and the world on display” (p. ix). She concentrates on the positionality of museum creators, collectors,