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Tekst 13

Honey Money

Honey Money: The Power of Erotic Capital, by Catherine Hakim, Allen Lane, RRP£20, 384 pages



Review by Lucy Kellaway

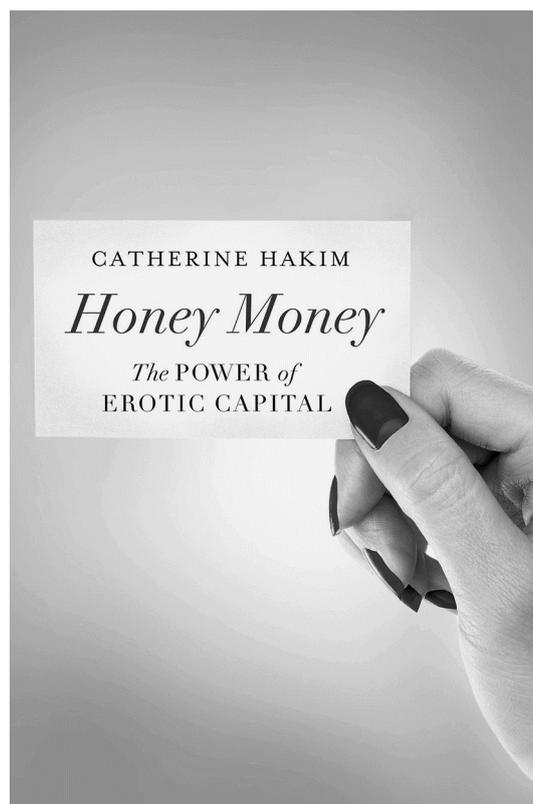
Do good-looking people fare better in the workplace?

If You've Got It, Flaunt It

If you haven't got it, go to the gym, get a better hairdo, plaster on a smile and then you will be able to flaunt it a bit too. This is the gist of *Honey Money: The Power of Erotic Capital* by Catherine Hakim, a research fellow at the London School of Economics. She argues that good-looking people do better and she calls on all women to use their erotic power against men, as a way of getting what they want – both at home and at work.

Erotic Capital

Hakim has clothed this bald thesis in the language of economics and sociology, coining the term “erotic capital” to cover a ragbag of attributes including beauty, sex appeal, dress sense, charm and fitness. Building on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, she argues that individuals have four different sorts of assets: “economic capital”, i.e. money; “human capital”, i.e. intelligence or education; and “social capital”, i.e. contacts. The fourth asset – “erotic capital” – has until now been ignored but, according to Hakim, is just as important as the other three and may be even more so because it affects you from the moment you are born. This last point, like much in the book, is dubious. Money surely makes a big difference from early childhood too, as does intelligence.



Beauty in the Boardroom?

Hakim has assembled a good deal of evidence to show what we know already: that life tends to be easier and more rewarding for the beautiful. But far from saying that this is unfair, she argues it is just as it should be: the attractive are nicer to be with, get on with people better and are, therefore, more productive. Some of the research is surprising. She quotes studies showing that handsome men are paid more, whereas you only need to look inside any large Anglo-Saxon corporation to see boardrooms stuffed with plain men. She also fails to investigate whether the relationship between looks and success runs in a straight line. I suspect that for women, erotic capital is a professional advantage only up to a point. Women who are fairly easy on the eye do well at work, but those who are outstandingly beautiful are penalised; distrusted by women and feared by men.

Rehash

Honey Money is an expanded version of a powerful article that Hakim wrote for Prospect magazine in 2010 and has lost as well as gained by being inflated to almost 400 pages. Nearly every point is made at least twice and some half a dozen times; even examples that seemed thin first time – such as the fact that Kate Moss and Katie Price make money from their erotic capital – are given a second airing later.

Looking Good

Reading the book from cover to cover leaves one with the feeling of having been clubbed repeatedly over the head. However, the experience isn't entirely unenjoyable, nor is it without purpose. Hakim is quite right on one central point: women in the UK and the US are not brought up to make the best of themselves, as French women are. We are taught that beauty is the poor cousin of brains; we are hung up about flaunting it. This book, for all the repetition, annoying jargon and sloppy reasoning, makes one see things differently. Sitting on the Tube having just finished it, I stared at all the frumpy English women and thought what a shame it was that so few of them were making anything of their erotic capital.

ft.com, 2011

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- 1p 43 “If You’ve Got It, Flaunt It” (kopje boven de eerste alinea)
Vindt de schrijfster van deze recensie dat de vrouwen om haar heen dit voldoende doen?
Antwoord met “Ja” of “Nee”, **én** schrijf het tussenkopje op dat boven de alinea staat waar je antwoord op baseert.