

Erotic Capital

In Danish Society and Labour Market

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Abstract

In this paper, I have worked with the term Erotic Capital that is coined by Catherine Hakim, a sociologist that is a specialist in women's employment and issues. According to Hakim, erotic capital is an asset in many social and economic setting such as media and politics. Erotic capital is an addition to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of society, the four main types of capital; cultural, social, symbolic and economic. Hakim defines erotic capital as the concept of an individual's beauty and sexual attractiveness can provide opportunities to advance in life. I have investigated the concept of erotic capital in marketing, within a Danish context. My project have reflected many of Catherine Hakim's theory ideas such as the logic of why erotic capital have the potential to be recognize as a legitimate social policy. My project have focused therefore on the different strategies employees used in the work field, to attract customers and selling more, and depending on their erotic capital to enhance their popularity with the customers and employers. I have also remained critical with the theory of erotic capital by adding the feminist theory, and arguing why erotic capital should be accepted into feminism. I have presented the issues of erotic capital as much as the prosperity of the theory.

Problem formulation

- Define erotic capital as theory and concept (in marketing and business)
- How is erotic capital being exploit in different companies in the Danish society?
- Why has erotic capital been denied or forgotten by the social science?

Literature review

Have you got erotic capital?

by Catherine Hakim / March 24, 2010

Have you got erotic capital? That's the question Catherine Hakim asks in the article for *Prospect*. Hakim is a sociologist at the prestigious London Business School and she has coined a term for ambiguous but important combination of physical and social attractiveness. Erotic capital is briefly defined as an inclusion of sexual appeal, charisma, social skills, liveliness, and self-presentation. The least understood personal asset, though it is completely visible has been overlooked in the past and rejected by some in the present. Hakim argues that (especially) women in Western society should embrace the "newest" capital together with the other four capitals, and now more than ever erotic capital is relevant as we live in a sexualized culture. Modern women have therefore also better opportunities to exploit their erotic capital because generally women put more effort in developing the soft skills of charm, persuasion and emotional intelligence. An example given by Hakim, is at parties women are usually better at dressing up than men. In the article from *Prospect*, Hakim argues for women exploiting the overlooked capital, and argues against feminists that advocates for equality in everything, even in sexuality. It is naïve to believe that women and men are equals when it comes to taking advantage of their own sex. Men are more prone to watch pornography and seek erotic clubs, than women are. And Hakim is backing this up with statistics; *World Health Organisation research shows that humans see sexual activity as essential to quality of life.*¹ Though, in these surveys presented in the article, states that men rank sex as more important than women. And here it is where Hakim sees an opportunity for women to empower themselves and their success; *the laws of supply and demand raise the value of women's erotic capital, in particular their beauty, sex appeal and sexual competence.*² But feminists have quickly perceived this as an exploitative and deeming of the female sex. And the coined term has therefore gotten a lot of harsh criticism from today's feminists. However, despite the criticism, the theory still applies especially in marketing, public relations, television, and advocacy, but it also applies to more average working places. *Good looking people can earn to 10-15% more than the plain or the ugly.*³ Therefore, no matter the criticism erotic capital is now as valued as human and economic capital.

¹ <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/have-you-got-erotic-capital>

² <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/have-you-got-erotic-capital>

³ <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/have-you-got-erotic-capital>

The Labour Market and Workplace Relations

European Sociological Review, Volume 26, Issue 5, 1 October 2010

In a sociological article review from 2010, erotic capital is being studied in the business field as a theory that gives statistics and facts that sustains Hakim's coined theory of erotic capital. It seems like erotic capital has been in our societies for quite some time. Many studies presented in the article go way back to the early 1990's. Hamermash and Biddle's national survey (United States and Canada) included interviewers' evaluation of responders' looks as well as information on occupation and earning. The survey showed that plain people earn less than average looking people, who earn less than good-looking men and women.⁴ Hamermash and Biddle showed that attractive individuals benefited economically due self-selecting themselves into employment or professions where good looks were rewarding. Later on in the 2000's, in Europe, Britain a study by Harper has been found that tall/or attractive people earned more than for example obese women. Therefore, again, there is an evidence that not only does the labour market "chooses" individuals with erotic capital for the jobs, but individuals with erotic capital also understands how to place themselves in order to benefit more economically. The article is from 2010, so their recent study of erotic capitals is from 2009, shows that good looks, intelligence, personality and self-confidence, all determine income for men and women alike.⁵ And that is what erotic capital is about, a combination of physical and personal assets. Though Hakim states that women can earn more because they have more erotic capital. The study by Judge, Hurst and Simon from 2009 shows that facial appearance on income is roughly equal to educational qualification but is not at the impact of intelligence. Attractive people are more often outgoing and have more self-confidence and are thus more successful in variety of jobs. Erotic capital has value in the labour market and has been somewhat overlooked, especially by sociologists. Catherine Hakim has in 2011 coined the term erotic capital to define this vague but crucial combination of attractiveness and social interaction that has had enhanced individuals' career in the past and now more than ever.

⁴ <https://academic-oup-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/esr/article/26/5/499/506250#7829877>

⁵ <https://academic-oup-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/esr/article/26/5/499/506250#7829877>

Flirting With Erotic Capital: Erotic Capital and Labor Market Earnings among Women

Isabelle C. Beulaygue

There has been made some empirical data on erotic capital, but as researched by Beulaygue, who has a Ph.d from the University of Miami. Though, a lot of data is an unpublished manuscript as stated in her thesis. However, she has investigated the impact of erotic capital on self-confidence and labour market outcomes by using a LISREL⁶ model on a sample 13.257 men and women from Wave IV of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health).⁷ Beulaygue's hypothesis is that there is a relationship between erotic capita, self-confidence and the outcome of earnings. Three out of the six elements of erotic capital have been studied in her research; beauty, social attractiveness and social presentation. The element of sexuality was excluded as it was irrelevant and could poorly been studied. The second element of the study, self-confidence, was measured into five dimensions; liveliness, optimism about future, confidence in solving one's problems, self-rated intelligence and self-rated beauty. And then, the marketing labour was constructed based on the observations of measured social perception and the logarithms of annual earnings. The study showed that erotic capital affects the self-confidence, and therefore, in return self-confidence affects the labour market outcomes. Besides that, the analysis also confirmed that the impact of erotic capital in the labour market outcomes was strongest among women.⁸ In the discussion part of Beulaygue's academic article, she concludes that there is a factual evidence that erotic capital does indeed affects women's earnings: *Women with higher levels of erotic capital earn on average 2.4% more annually than their counterparts with lower levels of erotic capital.*⁹ The thesis focused both on non-cognitive traits such as facial and body attractiveness but also cognitive traits such as social intelligence and personality liveliness. Social skills and social presentation had an important significance on earnings among women. Women excelling in self-presentation (measured by grooming) earned 8.4% more annually than women with standard social presentation. Beulaygue's findings are therefore consistent with Hakim's theoretical framework.

⁶ <https://www.statisticssolutions.com/lisrel/>

⁷ https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.dk/&httpsredir=1&article=1367&context=oa_theses p.23

⁸ https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.dk/&httpsredir=1&article=1367&context=oa_theses p. 24

⁹ https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.dk/&httpsredir=1&article=1367&context=oa_theses p. 60

Theory

The forms of capital by Pierre Bourdieu

I will be not going in depth with the forms of capital, though I want to briefly present them in project for a better understanding of Hakim's theory; erotic capital. Hakim claims that Bourdieu has overlooked erotic capital as one of the personal assets an individual can invest in. I attempt to introduce the original forms of capital by Bourdieu in order to understand why erotic capital may belong along with the other capitals. Therefore, by introducing Bourdieu I conclude a connection between all the capitals, including erotic capital.

Pierre Bourdieu was a French sociologist, his primary work revolved around the power dynamics within the society. He studied the diverse ways power and social order has been conveyed within and across generations.¹⁰ In 1986 he introduced *The Forms of Capital* where introduces the new concepts of capital – cultural and social capital.

The cultural capital

Cultural capital embodies a compilation of non-economic factors such as family background, social connections, academic status and taste. These factors can determine the social position within society – because certain form of cultural capital are valued over others and therefore can enhance or hinder one's mobility in the labour market, affecting one's income or wealth. Bourdieu presents cultural capital into three states; the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalized state. *The embodied state* as is the knowledge through education and socialization that we have accumulated over time and that exists within us. A great example of embodied cultural capital is when one learns a new language or is bilingual, that shows a form of knowledge across cultures and a discipline and determination of achieving a goal. When one is capable of speaking multiple languages in a globalized world, the individuals seems more attractive to the labour market and one's cultural capital can enhance one's outcome. *The objectified state* refers to the cultural goods and material objects such as; books, paintings, clothes, and even food. Such factors represent what kind of and how much cultural capital one possesses, therefore it also indicates one's economic class. Lastly, *the institutionalized state* is what cultural capital is measured and certified. Academic qualifications, job titles, religious status, and also conventional roles such as father, mother, wife and husband.

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Bourdieu

Social Capital

Social capital refers to the network of relations one has within the society, as stated by Bourdieu *of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual recognition*.¹¹ Therefore social capital is not naturally given through inheritance or background but something that we have to “nurture” in order to establish an useable (in long-or short term) network of relationships for the future. By transforming the relationship one acquire at the work, neighbourhood, or even kinship into relationship that are continuously maintained and nurtured overtime in order for an individual to call upon them for a favour or a form of enhancing their own capital.

Bourdieu discusses that the conversion between the two capitals, the social and the cultural, does derive from the economical capital through some effort of transformation. Both capitals enhance in some form one’s position in the labour market, and therefore one’s income or wealth. *The different types of capital can be derived from economic capital, but only at the cost of a more or less great effort of transformation...*¹² Bourdieu embodies both the nature and nurture concept of sociology into the forms of capital. Meaning that even though one can be born into a wealthy and prestigious family that is not enough to maintain one’s social capital, it needs to be nurtured further in usable tools. And the same way applies to erotic capital, which I will go in depth on the next page.

The Fourth Personal Asset; Erotic Capital by Catherine Hakim

Hakim coined the term back in 2011, almost a decade ago, referring to the complex but pivotal combination of beauty, sex appeal, skills of self-presentation and social skills – a combination of physical and social attractiveness that make some men and women attractive to all member of society (Hakim 2011).¹³ Unlike the other capitals, sexuality does play a role to a certain extent. Sexuality is easily overlooked because it only happens in an intimate setting. Though there has been surveys showing moneyed individuals are having more sex, with different partners in today’s society. Therefore, sexuality plays a huge role in modern society; influencing literature, pop culture, and advertising. Hakim is demonstrating that erotic capital belongs along economic, cultural, and social capital by analysing the sexuality and sexual relationships within societal setting. Like Bourdieu, Hakims is dividing erotic capital into six “states” as Bourdieu would

¹¹ <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/doi/pdf/10.1002/9780470755679>

¹² <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/doi/pdf/10.1002/9780470755679> p. 287

¹³ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom. United States of America: Basic Books . p. 2

describe it. Erotic capital embodies six elements, that I will briefly present in the next pages. These elements will be relevant further on in my analysis of empirical data. The erotic capital's element will be investigated in my interviews in the labour market, to understand how erotic capital unfolds it self in the Danish context.

The first element; Beauty

Beauty is a central element of erotic capital, despite the cultural and temporal variations of in definitions of beauty.¹⁴ Hakim is mindfully explaining erotic capital's beauty element in different cultural societies, in her book she clearly understands that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Hakim is including all kinds of beauty standards; [...] *notably in southern Africa, admire women with large, voluptuous bodies. In western Europe, fashion models can be tall and thin...*¹⁵ Beauty also diverse from generation to generation. In the past sophisticated beauty such as fair skin and rosy lips were much appreciated. In today's societies "sculpted" faces with large eyes and big mouths are now prioritized. As Bourdieu, Hakim has a nurtured approach when acquiring the erotic capital. Beauty is not only inherited can be achieved. *Getting fit, improving posture, wearing flattering colours, and shapes, choosing appropriate hairstyles, and clothes – such changes can add up to a completely new look.*¹⁶

The second element; Sexual attractiveness

By sexual attractiveness Hakim is referring to the sexual appeal of the body, personality, femininity or masculinity. The way an individual carry himself in the world; the way someone moves, talks, and behaves, perhaps in a more flirtatiously manner. When it comes to the body image, in western cultures men are dividing this personal asset on the value of breasts, buttocks, or long legs. While women prefer men with strong athletic bodies or others prefer more elegant and slender looking man. Nevertheless one's taste, sex appeal is universally valued.¹⁷

The third element: Social attractiveness

¹⁴ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom. United States of America: Basic Books . p.11

¹⁵ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom. United States of America: Basic Books . p. 11

¹⁶ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom. United States of America: Basic Books . p.11

¹⁷ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom. United States of America: Basic Books . p 12

Social skills have always been valued in the society, even Bourdieu stresses the importance of network and relationship, and especially continuously maintaining them. Obviously a way to maintain relationships is based on the skill of interaction, the ability to make people like you, feel at ease, and the ability to stay relevant. Those are some of the techniques to enhance one's erotic capital, but also to extend the social capital, as well. Some individuals have more charisma and social skill than others; this element of erotic capital is not universal. But it can be learned at some extent.

The fourth element: Liveliness

People who are full of life and joy can be extremely attractive to others. Liveliness is a mixture of physical appeal, social energy and good humour. Individuals that expose a lot of life and energy are more likely to have positive attitudes towards life, and that can enhance their attractiveness.

Hakim gives an example of liveliness being expressed through sports or dancing skills. That is why athletes have a special allure.¹⁸

The fifth element: Social presentation

Social presentation embodies one's personal style, make-up, jewellery, perfume, and hairstyles. The way one accessorizes and styles themselves can announce their social status in various ways. In her book, Hakim mentions monarchs and presidents dressing for social events or functions to emphasize their power to the public.¹⁹ But also, ordinary people when going to a party or other social event, dress to make themselves attractive and show their social status to the strangers they meet. One's fashion taste says a lot about a person, and therefore being skilled in choosing the tasteful and stylish clothes and accessories are crucial for maintaining one's erotic capital.

The sixth element: Sexuality

The sexuality element of erotic capital is what makes erotic capital a personal asset on its own. Sexuality can be interpreted as sexual competence, energy, erotic imagination, playfulness, and everything else that makes for a sexually satisfying partner.²⁰ Obviously, whether one is a good lover in bed or not, it's only knowable to their partner. Therefore, Hakim makes it clear that there has not been any surveys on people's sex appeal and sexual competence. She does mention though, at

¹⁸ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) *Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom*. United States of America: Basic Books . p 12

¹⁹ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) *Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom*. United States of America: Basic Books . p 12

²⁰ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) *Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom*. United States of America: Basic Books . p 13

there has been a national survey on individuals' sex drive. It showed that a minority of men and women have a strong sex drive but majority are moderately active.²¹ Therefore, sexuality is listed as the last element of erotic capital, because sexual skill is not universal. However, the other five elements come into in all social contexts, visibly or invisibly.

Hakim's concept of erotic capital does not narrowly focus on sex appeal. The combination of the six elements provide a wider connection between the physical looks and the social attractiveness. The exact combination of the element might vary from a career to another. Individuals working in the entertainment industry have more erotic capital because their career depend on it. But it can still be relevant in real social contexts. There is a seventh element that only applies to woman, that is fertility. In some culture fertility is a successful asset especially if the woman's children are healthy and beauty. The last element gives woman an advantage over men.

Beauty; As a philosophical concept

When discussed beauty can be quite a controversial theme in Western-philosophy. I will attempt to define beauty as a philosophically concept based on Stanford's Encyclopaedia of Philosophy²² and Daniel Hamermesh's definition of beauty defined in his book *Beauty Pays*²³. Beauty has traditionally been considered as a high value together with goodness, truth, and justice. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, beauty was a central concept for many philosophers, such as Shaftesbury, Hume, Burke and Kant, are just the few thinkers attempting to defying and explain beauty. The major debate of beauty is whatever beauty is objective or subjective, Stanford's Encyclopaedia is presenting the following thinkers and their understanding of beauty; Hume was certain that beauty is not quality in itself, but merely something we create in our mind, and therefore each mind perceives beauty differently. In addition, Kant writes a similar explanation in his book *The Critique of Judgment*; "*The judgment of taste is therefore not a judgment of cognition, and is consequently not logical but aesthetical, by which we understand that whose determining ground*

²¹ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom. United States of America: Basic Books . p p. 13

²² <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/beauty/>

²³ Hamarmesh, Daniel. (2011) Beauty Pays. United Kingdom: Princeton University Press.

can be no other than subjective.” (Kant 1790, section 1)²⁴ But one wonders, if nothing beautiful is objective in the world, then how can individuals experience something beautiful collectively? Obviously the personal judgement can differ from person to person, but again most people (if not all people) would agree that a perfect rose or a dramatic sunset is beautiful. Therefore, it seems senseless to debate whatever beauty is objective or subjective, because we often regard other people’s taste based on entitled respect in cases of moral, political or factual opinions. Until the eighteenth century, most thinkers consider beauty as an objective element, because they located it in the qualities of the beautiful thing itself. As In *De Veritate Religione*, a work written Edward Herbert, Augustine asks; whether things are beautiful because they give delight, or whether they give delight because they are beautiful,²⁵ where he certainly answers that is the second. Thinkers like Plato and Aristotle disagree what beauty is but however they do agree that beauty is objective, as it is not localized in the response of the beholder. As they considered beauty in the classical concept, that beauty is a matter of define proportions among other relations.

Theory for The Humanities

In this chapter I will be taking Foucault’s theory of humans as a base of writing this project. I will be critical and analyse the modern (or postmodern) society that we live in today. I will analyse the concept of Erotic Capital by being critical of how it unfolds within society and individual. Considering that Erotic Capital is quite an additional to Bourdieu’s capitals. It is an additional because Bourdieu has not mentioned it before in his work, on the ground that society in the 1980’s did not diverge any express of erotic capital. Sexualisation began emerge as issue in the public eye around the 2000’s, where a number of discursive actors claimed sexualisation as a feminist issue. Feminists have dealt with this issue long before the 2000’s, but the issue become more medialized in the 2000’s by several feminist actors, emphasizing that, many young women are unable to exercise meaningful choices due to the fact of a commercialized and sexist culture. In 2011, Hakim found that a component of a sexualized trend can be beneficial if using it properly in the right context. Focusing on the exterior and the personal asset could be exploited in a time where society fixate on appearance and personality. A concept like Catherine Hakim can only be validated by putting it into doubt. Hakim’s statement is that individuals with a higher erotic capital are more like to successful in life. I attempted to test this statement by conducting several interviews with

²⁴ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/beauty/>

²⁵ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/beauty/>

individual working in job places where social contact is crucial for good business. The critical theory demands a procedure of critique before agreeing upon an expression of truth. The aim of the theory of human science is to analyse the human behaviour and remain critical towards it by formulate or research theories to predict it, as Hakim have done with Erotic Capital. One has therefore the responsibility to acknowledge the problems within the individuals by developing remedies. One needs therefore to understand the relationship between causation and correlation. Whatever erotic capital causes success or does there exist a relationship between erotic capital and self-success. In researching such criticism, there must be a scale in the visual sphere between the various kinds of evidence, such as; impression, readings, and learned compilations.²⁶ Therefore, the interviews I have been conducting will help me come closer to a conclusion of how erotic capital is intertwined with success and or the working field. The theory of humanities validates the universal scientific truth that is always relative. On account of that it can only be confirmed by in relation to other objective factors and certain circumstances. And established certain methods than can tell how the circumstances relate to the truth.²⁷ Though, scientific theories are not always trustworthy, but people still to choose some theories over others, as truth. An explanation for that could be that the scientific the research of method that is developed by scientists apply their perspective theories and conclusions, and therefore seemingly we put our beliefs into it. My project consist of testing observations and attempting collecting consistent results based on individuals who can provide some insight from their own perspective on the theory. I anticipate that many of the interviewees are not familiar with Catherine Hakims theory of erotic capital. But perhaps have heard about *“beautiful people are more successful in life”*²⁸ and there can draw a correlation between their level of success and their achievements in the working place. When presented with the theory of erotic capital, individuals can either support the theory by putting their confidence into licensed status of Catherine Hakim or denied on the basis that they find it not to be reasonable. The social epistemology in this project is an extension and reorientation of the theory of capitals by Bourdieu, as proposed by Hakim. Epistemology in this project will deal with the process through which the knowledge of erotic capital is negotiated and generated. Hakim also states that erotic capital should be more exploitable for women, as they have more of it. According to some, this

²⁶ Foucault , Michel. (1970) The Order of Things . United Kingdom: Tavistock Publications

²⁷ De Sousa Santos, Boaventura. (2014) Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global lines to ecologies of knowledges, in Epistemologies of the South, New York, Routledge, 118 - 135

²⁸ <https://www.businessinsider.com/attractive-people-are-more-successful-2012-9?r=US&IR=T&IR=T>

includes a research of studying and legitimizing the project only by knowledge acquired by women.

²⁹ Hakim is aiming a political goal by understanding the feminist epistemology, and tries to oppose the oppression of women, by encouraging them to exploit their erotic capital. In the opposition of men using their erotic capital shamelessly without thinking of the morality it. The notion of feminism is going to be mentioned briefly in my project as it is very much associated with the Western thinking and postmodernism.

Method

I will be conducting interviews in the labour market in Copenhagen. The method of interviewing I've chosen is the unstructured interview, as I believe that I will gather more empirical data by having an open discussion about how erotic capital unfolds itself in a Danish context.

An unstructured interview is a method which there is no specific set of prearranged questions for the interviewee. However, I have established some ground questions on what kind of questions I will be asking, though these questions are not fixed, as I want the conversation to be flexible.

Obviously, the topic has been firm from the start, as I am researching for the term of Erotic Capital in the Danish labour market. I have chosen this way of unstructured interviewing because I want an open conversation that flows like an everyday discussion between two individuals. The interviews will be more comfortable for the interviewee as they are not as formal and stiff, as the traditional way of interviewing. During all the interviews, I will be directing the conversation in the direction I need it to be, in order for me to gather empirical data but also attempting to make erotic capital as a familiar concept in the labour market. The interviews will be recorded as voice recordings (with the approval of the interviewee), and further, I will transcribe the recordings into useful quotes that will be used appropriately in my analysis but also in my discussion part, in order to confirm or deny my hypothesis.

I have chosen the instructed interviews because I will attempt to conduct the interviews in the working field of the interviewee. Therefore, assuming they do not have the time to sit formally and answer predominated questions. It is a qualitative research method that prioritizes the validity and the depth of the interviewees' answers. The interviewee will be chosen based on their working field with a visible dress code or even presentable employees. My hypothesis is that perhaps they exploit their erotic capital unconsciously.

²⁹ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology/#FEP>

Analysis of Erotic Capital in the Danish Labour Market

The book *Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom*, embodies every aspect of erotic capital. From celebrities, to MBA graduates and ordinary people working in the service sector. In chapter seven Hakim states that there is a beauty premium over the whole workforce.³⁰ However, the beauty premium in regular jobs are usually questioned as being seen unfair and even discriminatory. Especially against women, who according to the findings of Catherine Hakim, the beauty premium is not as applicable to good-looking women as it is to good-looking men. Even though women have more erotic capital than men, due to the fact put more effort into their appearance and social skills. An explanation of that could be (mostly in the ordinary labour market) most social aspect of erotic capital might be perceived as inappropriate, such as skill of self-presentation and dress, persuasiveness, social liveliness can in some extreme cases lead towards sexual harassment from the employer. In one of my conducted interviews with a female telemarketer disclosed that many of her male colleagues and or clients, tend to make some inappropriate comments or goggle her in a noticeable way. She is good looking and young. And she loves spending time and money on her appearance; high-end makeup products, expensive perfumes, getting her nails done and buying stylish clothes. The telecom company has a restricted dress-code with black trousers and tailored shirt. When asked what, she thinks about the dress-code, she answered that is mainly to keep a professional omen to the company. The intention of that question was to investigate if the uniform of the company kept her from achieving her full potential of erotic capital. She seems comfortable with the *uniform* as long as her makeup and hair was in place. In the same chapter mention, above, Hakim explains further on the discrimination of attractive women in the working field. It seems based on laboratory experiments that highly qualified attractive women are less suitable than highly qualified attractive male.³¹ The psychology behind this puzzlement is that consciously or unconsciously employers base their choice of applicants based on the stereotype of masculinity and femininity. Attributes such as more motivated, unemotional and decisive applies to the masculine candidate; such as attractive men and unattractive women. While the assumption of the feminine women is that she easily can be distracted by marriage to a successful man, and

³⁰ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) *Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom*. United States of America: Basic Books . p. 163

³¹ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) *Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom*. United States of America: Basic Book. P. 164

therefore become less focused on their own career. It seems like the employer discrimination appears only to be relative against attractive women. The female telemarketer disclosed that she has not experienced discrimination at high levels, but does feel that her male colleagues are usually assigned with more serious and responsible tasks than she. Obviously, it is hard to analyse the reason of that, as I am not familiar with her work ethics. Though she is appreciated for her social skills and confidence when interacting with clients. She is likable by the clients and they seem to feel comfortable when talking with her. I monitored a conversation she had with a family that tried to find the right fit phone subscription. That is the confirmation in Hakim's statement that erotic capital is not only about the appearance, but rather a crucial combination between good looks and attractive social skills. Based on a study from Argentina early 2000's, showed that the mark-up for attractiveness was just as strong when employers interviewed applicants over the phone without have seen them.³² This explains that the beauty premium also consists of charm and alluring social skills within the work relationships. A sales assistant from a clothing store that I have interviewed disclose to me that clients tend to buy more once she opens up to them and find a connection between she and the clients. The clothing store she works in demands that she wore the company's in a way that is stylish and inspiring to the customers. She has long beautiful hair, is fit and tanned, wears fake lashes and nails with a bit more amount of makeup than the average female. Indirectly, she explains to me that she represents the company and the brand, so looks are everything when is working. Though, she stresses a lot the fact that being cheerful and smiling is also a part of the brands experience as a brand and clothing store. While I wonder around in the store, I noticed that many customers ask for her opinion and expertise on how to style the clothes together. While the customer tries the clothes on, the sales assistant goes and picks more pieces that would work with the trousers chosen by the customer. When the customer comes outside the wardrobe, the sale assistant compliments the customer and is very kind towards the customer. She explained that the clothing store she is working for tries to be different than the mainstream clothing stores, where many of the employees are too busy to take of their customers. From conducting these interviews I can see a coherent connection between erotic capital as a theory and as a practice in the labour market in Denmark. Because the customer ended up buying everything that the sales assistant

³² Hakim, Catherine . (2011) *Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom.* United States of America: Basic Book. P. 171

suggests. I therefore also, conclude that the impact of an attractive person's positive personality, social skills, and manner as well are closely intertwined.³³

The Beauty of Social Skills

The postmodern society is heavily established by the service-sector industries, as the jobs that involve working closely with people are increasingly. Therefore, social skills are crucial; every job posting requires an employee with great people skills and a flair for service. And we as individuals always claim that we love working closely with people. Though, it is not untrue, but do we all have a talent for socializing in way to enhance our opportunities or make a sale? Social skills are fundamental for the working place even if one does not have contact with customers, the social interaction with colleagues is still an important relationship to maintain and excel at. The ability to be an agreeable colleague, easy to talk to, charming and friendly is a great asset.³⁴ Such an asset contributes to make an individual more attractive. Hakim explains the importance of a simple smile. It is a great asset because everybody looks better when smiling and it indicates that you have a friendly personality, and therefore you may be easier to talk to. A universal symbol of welcome and acceptance. Almost every one of the interviewees I've talked to mention the value of the smile; *The most important thing is to try to form a kind of good relationship with the customers. To do that by having a smile on the lips, welcoming them (into the store), just engaging in an ordinary conversation with them and heart about their needs as customers* [My translation].

Dress Code

Being a qualified and social skilled candidate is important for the job, but studies show that the way you present yourself on the outside is just as important, and sometimes even more important the two factors mentioned above. Hakim mentions in chapter seven, section 4; an experimental study that tested the impact of grooming and self-presentation on selection for a professional job. The results showed the following; well-groomed and appropriately dressed candidates were more likely to be hired than poorly groomed candidates. Certainly, poorly qualified and poorly groomed were less likely to be hired and the well-qualified and well-groomed candidates was most likely to be hired. The statement of this experiment was that the poorly qualified but well-dressed was more likely to be hired than the well-qualified but poorly groomed. The study therefore confirms that

³³ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) *Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom*. United States of America: Basic Book. P. 171

³⁴ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) *Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom*. United States of America: Basic Book. P. 172

attractiveness and good self-presentation can count for just as much as educational qualifications in the workforce. I took this theory with me while conducting the interviews. And in fact, many of the interviewees' workplace had a dress code that steered the employees' erotic capital. Many telecom companies in Denmark have a neutral dress code such as tailored (blue, or grey) skirt and black trousers. Another interview has been conducted in another telecom company, this time I interviewed a man; *"For the most part, it's shirt and well-dressed pants in neutral colors. Sometimes we can also put a tie on, but that usually happens when we have certain events or new product launching."* And then he expressed his positive opinion about the dress code; *"I think the dress code works very well, we appear as well dressed as possible and I think it has a good impact on the customers."* [My translation]. Uniforms are used to ensure the employees of the style and dress code of the employers, as they represent a public image of the company. But some jobs can boost one's erotic capital at work while other work places tries to homogenise one's erotic capital such as stewardesses. Though there are (clothing) stores that do not require a dress code but does demand that the employees wear their brand of clothing at work. Then the dress code is relying on individual's skills to style themselves in a way that inspires the customers to buy the brand's clothes. The employees I have interviewed who work in retail stores have expressed their thoughts on their responsibility to style themselves when coming to work; *"Customers tend to ask me about the clothes I am wearing. So my looks can impress people, so therefore I always wear something from the store. Fashion is very important, and I show that in the way I style my clothes and makeup."* Another young woman working in another retail store stated; *Our store has not got an uniform assigned to us but it demands we only wear the brand's clothes in the store, and that we look like the girls in our monthly fashion catalogue. Otherwise it can disturb the customer's experience of the store."* [My translation] After I finished interviewing the staff, I would observe the store and the colleagues I did not interview, to construct a conclusion on how erotic capital unfolds itself directly and indirectly. It seems like stores with a minimal dress code (such as the demand to wear whatever as long as it is the brand's), had more employee with a sense of style and self-presentation than the stores with a dress code or uniform. The employees dressing as they pleased showed not only well-grooming skills but also emitted their sense of personality. Some employees were minimalistic in their look with a bit makeup on and just plain styling of white t-shirt and trousers. While other employees were dressed in colourful pieces, with much more makeup and hairdos. As a customer, one can detect such traits in an employee. While many working places pay their employees by the hour, some employees work on commission. That means

that they need to sell the brand's products beside what the customer might have intended to buy. Therefore, erotic capital is relevant and crucial, even in small companies in the everyday life, the combination that erotic capital embodies is used in the Danish labour market, consciously and unconsciously.

Discussion

Women and Sex

The hyper sexualized society of today always seeks to control and channel sexual expression – especially when it comes from women. Women get easily attacked for any minor thing they do; whatever they are too fat, or too anorexic, wearing too makeup, dressing too sexy or too dull. And they especially get attacked when they are expressing their sexual feelings. Therefore, I will discuss in this chapter how erotic capital is an empowerment tool for women and argue against feminism's attitudes towards erotic capital. According to Hakim, feminists (especially those from Anglo-Saxo countries) have a more radical and patriarchal approach to sexuality and women's role within the society. The false dichotomy that the feminist theory often erect is the following; *a woman is valued either for her human capital (brains, education, work experience, and dedication to her career) or for her erotic capital (beauty, figure, dress style, grace and charm.*³⁵ Hakim comments upon that with a very intrigued question; why can't women have it both? The problem with the mainstream feminist theory is that it sustains the male predominance (in theory), because most feminists view women's position in society exclusively on their social, political and human capital, just like society views men. Therefore, Hakim stresses the fact that there is an essential difference between men and women. As erotic capital is mostly held by women, overlooking women's erotic capital is a crucial mistake in the society. Because it means that women can be able to break the male control over their sexuality and fertility. What I mean by that is that with erotic capital women can take some of the control back from the male domination in the society. According to numerous articles and research points that men have a stronger sexual desire and higher libido than females, so therefore naturally men are attracted to sexually attractive women. For that reason, women should exploit their erotic capital and seize every benefit of it. Both patriarchal groups and feminists are fighting against women's freedom to exploit their sexuality and attractiveness as a capital. So therefore, is a clearly link between radical feminism and patriarchy. It seems illogic to me that women would not support other women in the decision (or in any other decision) of exploiting their beauty and charm

³⁵ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom. United States of America: Basic Book. P 73-74

and take control of men's nature in their favour, for once? After years of controlling women in every aspect of their life, exploiting their erotic capital it is not the worst that could happen for men. When researching for feminism theory on the internet, a quite interesting article came up; *Why I don't want to become equal to men*³⁶ written by Jessica Eaton³⁷, where she explains what mainstream feminism is not, and what feminism is truly about; *Feminism is the liberation of women and girls all over the world from the patriarchy and misogyny that continues to harm and oppress them as a class of people. Feminism centres women unflinchingly and unapologetically. Feminism is the conversation about women's issues in the world; without having to add some tokenistic sentence at the end acknowledging that men also experience some things too.* Many feminists have criticize the theory of erotic capital because it is shallow and indulging in men's expectations of female sexuality. But that should it be the ultimate feminist goal; possessing qualities from both worlds. Being a beautiful and educated (and successful) woman seems like the ultimate goal for every woman, and as a feminist one should empower women in enhancing their status in a society that even today is spread with misogyny and patriarchy. In numerous interviews and in the book, Hakim mentions how men can freely exploit their erotic capital while women always second guess it even though women have much more erotic capital than men. Women keep on thinking from an ethical perspective whatever it is right or wrong to exploit their charm and beauty for success. and that's why Hakim stresses the fact the women must exploit their capital as freely as men do. Most feminists (as men) reject women's sexual expression rather than seeking to impose female control over it. And this lead back to the beginning where Hakim states that radical feminism, when it comes to sexuality, is anchored in patriarchy as they lack the understanding of erotic capital as a source of female power.³⁸

Erotic Capital in Denmark

The theory erotic capital can be easily misunderstood as an encouragement for women to engage in sexual favours so it enhances their career (or life) opportunities. While I was researching for the theory within the Danish context, I find insufficient literature about erotic capital in Denmark. Though, I found a blog by Emilie Von Hauen, that is a Danish sociologist, that starts the blog entry with the following sentence; *Now it's the time to step into your stilettos and show cleavage if you*

³⁶ <https://victimfocus.wordpress.com/2018/08/04/why-i-dont-want-to-become-equal-to-men/>

³⁷ *Psychologist specialising in victim blaming and self blame following sexual violence. International independent specialist researcher and writer for www.victimfocus.org.uk -*

³⁸ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) *Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom*. United States of America: Basic Books. P 76

want to help create a cultural revolution that both men and women will love - but that you will make the most of! [My translation] I found an issue with this entry because in reality that such a little percentage of what erotic capital is about. With an entry like this many can misunderstand the whole concept and focus on a small part that has less influence on its own, without the other five element of erotic capital. Hakim does address this misunderstanding in her book; *After saying that women should exploit their erotic capital, I was asked repeatedly if that mean displaying cleavage at work? Of course, not! There is world of difference between dressing for a date and dressing for the office, between dressing attractively and distractingly.*³⁹ As I was reading the book, and I came across this section where Hakim explains that erotic capital is not an invitation for women to return to selling themselves out in the society, therefore erotic capital is depending on the ; are you in the boardroom or in the bedroom? Different occupations demand a certain kind of erotic capital. Like the interviewees I have talked with; the woman working in the telecom company was not dressed like the woman working in the retail store, because the working place demanded the appropriate aspect of erotic capital.

While investigating for erotic capital in the Danish context I got absorbed by several debates by a “fourth-wave” feminist group called GirlSquad consisting of Louise Kjøslér, Nikita Klæstrup, and Ekaterina Krarup Andersen. Women that are debating the woman’s (sexuality) role in the society. Their movement is an intense version of erotic capital. But the part that was interesting to my project was the fact that they addressed the issue of beautiful (or in their case the sexualized) women must be taken serious in all contexts in the society. This statement resembled much to the statistic that Hakim provided in her book, about beautiful women earning less than handsome men. *A man who looks good, can easily have success without being questioned about it. But if a beautiful woman is successful, you always hear that she has fucked her way to the top. That does not necessarily apply. Intelligence requires the use of its appearance in an appropriate manner.* (Klæstrup, Nikita 2017)⁴⁰[My translation]. All three women mentioned above are socialists that use social media to express their sexuality and beauty by posting rather racy pictures. Nevertheless, these women hold influential degrees in subjects such as psychology and theology, and are actively engage in the societies as writers and debaters. In several debates, especially Louise Kjøslén ,that holds psychology degree, argues that why can’t women make use of their body and sexuality and

³⁹ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) *Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom*. United States of America: Basic Book. P. 175-176

⁴⁰ <https://www.berlingske.dk/kultur/kvinder-skal-laere-at-staa-ved-deres-erotiske-kapital>

still being taken seriously by the society. I understand the erotic capital provides much more than just sexuality, but it makes more sense of why feminists are criticizing the new waves of feminism that focuses on the female body and beauty. My investigation for erotic capital in the Danish society has lead me to discovering that the way erotic capital is unfolding itself is as a battle for the subject (according to Kjøslén) to be in control of its own sexuality without being it objectified. Most critics of Hakim's book tend to highlight the issue of sexual harassment and sexual objectification when reading the theory is that erotic capital can invite men to perceive women as vulnerable and therefore the male sex right is still in control, and therefore the male sex right leads men to impose themselves on women. In an interview from 2018, Dr. Hakim responded to this by explaining that men who feel the right to impose themselves are men who are ugly and bullies. In that sense, erotic capital is also an important theory that educate men in appreciating a woman's value and reward women's effort in nurturing their natural assets.

Why Has Erotic Capital Been Supressed?

Catherine Hakim answer this question bluntly in the first pages of her book. Stating that the reason erotic capital has been overlooked by social science theorists and intellectuals is because most of them are men. The failure in Pierre Bourdieu's work is anchored in male dominance of economic, social and cultural/human capital, therefore the only theory that is been delivered out of such research of the society is coming only from a man's perspective. All along the history men has been trying to control women and their sexuality, and treating women as men's rights and not independent individuals. Social science, history and cultural history has never investigated women as a centred focus within the society. And therefore, erotic capital has been overlooked as it is held mostly by women, and not in interest for the male hegemony in society. From a historically point, male control over women's sexuality and fertility is an entitlement for dividing women into respectable and not respectable, pure and impure, and if one looks further this division than was reconstructed in male domination over women's earnings and occupations.⁴¹ The stigmatization of women ensured that every women was placed in a category, and women will therefore know *their place*. Women that did not submit to male domination were stigmatized as promiscuous, ruining their reputation was effective as it ensured that not many women will rebel against male subordination. That of course until the feminists' waves. But still even in our today society the

⁴¹ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom. United States of America: Basic Book. P. 66

double standard of a man sleeping with many sexual partners, but criticizing women when do the same. Or as I mention before, the GirlSquad's goal of equality when it comes to sexual expression. A man is praised for his beautiful body when he posts a picture of himself topless on the social media, while women get slut shamed for doing the same thing.

Another interesting question of why erotic capital has been overlooked according to Hakim, is that the elite cannot monopolize it, so it is in their interest to marginalized it.⁴² The elites of the society can easily monopolize the other forms of capital. To starts with they already have the economic capital on their side, and therefore all the other capitals joins in naturally. With money, you can buy everything; getting into the most prestigious universities, the most qualified training and skills, and the work experience that most individuals would have to work many jobs and years to achieve it. Even people can be bought with money; social status can be raised higher when being rich, and a network with wealthy and influential individuals. But erotic capital embodies elements that cannot be entirely bought. Sure, you can buy plastic surgery if you are wealthy and not attractive. And you can hire a stylist to help you choose the right outfits. But the other elements of erotic capital are not to be bought. They demand a kind natural talent, elements like liveliness, social attractiveness and sexuality cannot be monopolized and therefore the theory of erotic capital has been hushed.

Conclusion

Even though erotic capital has been in the back of human conscious for hundreds of years, the theory of erotic capital is innovative in the way that it breaks the taboo of the premium beauty and women's equality to men. It is an alternative but also an addition to the existing capitals, individuals can either exploit their current assets or add erotic capital to enhance the opportunities in life. I, myself, was quite critical of the theory because it seemed shallow that looks and beauty can sometimes be as usual as education and qualifications. But after the reading Hakim's book and reading articles criticizing the theory, I concluded that perhaps erotic capital has been suppressed because of its strong influence. There is still so much debate about women's status and power within the society, and even though women have achieved so many of the goals of feminism, there are still battles that require a discussion. Such as can beautiful women can be taken seriously? And that must be a rhetorical question. Because of course, you can have beauty and brains at the same time. Even though feminism have through history fought against men's standards and expectations

⁴² Hakim, Catherine . (2011) Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom. United States of America: Basic Book. P.17

of female beauty. Today society (and feminists) must therefore easily accept the idea of women exploit their personal asset and enhancing their life opportunities by depending on their beauty, brains and body; *Feminism should be able to accommodate both the bimbo and the librarian, and also the bimbo librarian and all other shades of how a woman can be.* ⁴³(Klæstrup, Nikita) [My translation] Whatever erotic capital can be recognized for social policy is still to debate, as the other capitals are, therefore Hakim argues that erotic capital “adds value” to the labour market, even in occupations where it could seem irrelevant. ⁴⁴ When I conducted the interviews in the telecom companies or the stores where the employees are paid by the hour, I found out that erotic capital was still being exploited, it was just unconsciously, as they did not know that using their charisma and good self-presentation were elements of erotic capital.

I am aware that there has been a lot of limitations when researching this theme. There is very little Danish literature about erotic capital within the Danish society, and therefore much of the literature I have been reading and collecting theory from has been from other countries, and then I tried to applied into the Danish context. And, when conducting the interviews, I have found that many people in Denmark, are not as familiar with the theory as I thought they would be. So many of the questions I have arranged for them to answer, fail since they could relate to the what erotic capital embodies.

⁴³ <https://www.berlingske.dk/kultur/kvinder-skal-laere-at-staa-ved-deres-erotiske-kapital>

⁴⁴ Hakim, Catherine . (2011) *Erotic capital, the power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom*. United States of America: Basic Book. P. 206

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