



Unequal Desires: Race and Erotic Capital in the Stripping Industry

Siobhan Brooks

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Investigates race and racism in the U.S. exotic dance industry.

Winner of the 2008 SUNY Press Dissertation/First Book Prize in Queer Studies, this groundbreaking ethnographic study of racial stratification in queer and straight strip clubs examines the lives and working conditions of Black and Latina dancers in strip clubs in New York City and Oakland, California. Through interviews with dancers, customers, managers, bouncers, and other strip club employees, Siobhan Brooks explores the connections between race, desire, and commodification in what she terms “desire industries.” The study finds that even in times of economic gains for a minority of Black and Latino/a middle-class populations, sexual stereotypes and racial hypersexualization continue to affect many women of color who work in the sex industry, leading to more exposure to violence, wage gaps, and less access to more lucrative shifts and performance venues. Through her insightful and illuminating analysis, Brooks makes the case that racialized erotic capital is central to what owners think will sell, what customers will buy, how dancers negotiate those desire landscapes, and the male and female consumption of desire.

“Brooks has highlighted a fresh and new perspective with which to study stripping, and the field will do well to think about these factors ... Anyone interested in gender, deviant behavior, race and ethnicity, class, and qualitative methodology would benefit from reading this book and incorporating its ideas into their own scholarly activities.” —*Contemporary Sociology*


“Well researched, easy to read.” — CHOICE

“Whether you are looking for an easy-to-follow, insightful introduction to the ways race and racism play out in strip clubs or you seek comprehensive ethnographic research revealing the impact of race (as it intersects with gender and class) on erotic capital, *Unequal Desires* is a book to pick up.” — *Spread Magazine*

“...creates the space for a new conversation about sex work and race.” — *Elevate Difference*

“In this impressive study, Siobhan Brooks really thinks through the meanings of butch-femme, performances of pimp/ho dynamics, and race, class, and sexuality, and she links her analyses nicely to other work on Black lesbian genders. Brooks has a very nice touch with theory and she leavens her whole study with insightful commentary on sex, gender, and the meaning of erotic labor. This is a superb book, well researched, well written, and with real contributions to make to the existing scholarship.” — Judith Halberstam, author of *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*

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