



The Beauty Trade: Youth, Gender, and Fashion Globalization (Oxford Studies in Gender and International Relations)

Angela B. McCracken

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While it is frequently trivialized, the business of beauty is one of the most important global industries, generating millions of dollars and implicating many more the world over, from consumers to corporate elites. As trends spread so do ideas about standards of appearance and what is necessary to look good and fit in -- standards that are often influenced by ideas about race, class and gender norms. In looking at beauty products, practices, and ideas of youth in Guadalajara, Mexico, *The Beauty Trade* takes seriously the question of whether and how beauty norms are changing in relation to the globalizing beauty economy. Angela B. V. McCracken considers who benefits and who loses from beauty globalization and what this means for gender norms among youth. Weaving together fascinating ethnographic research on beauty practices and insights from political economy theory, the book presents a feminist analysis of the global economy of beauty.

Rather than a sign of frivolity, the beauty economy is intimately connected to youth's social and economic development. Cosmetic makeovers have become a modern rite of passage for girls, enabling social connections and differentiations, as well as entrepreneurial activities. The global beauty economy is a phenomenon generated by young people, mostly women, laboring in, teaching, and consuming beauty --- and eager for belonging and originality, using every mechanism at their disposal to enhance their appearance. As McCracken shows, globalization is not homogenizing beauty standards to a Western ideal; rather, it is diversifying beauty standards. *The Beauty Trade* explains how globalization, combined with youth's desires for uniqueness, is enabling the spread of a diversity of beauty cultures, including alternative visions of gender appropriate looks and behavior.



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