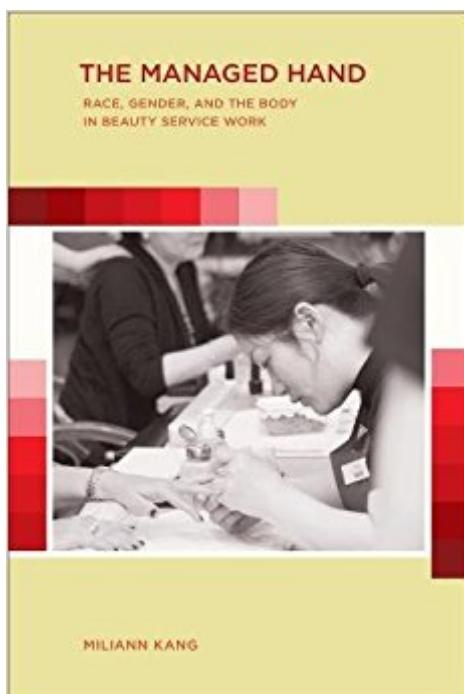


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# The Managed Hand: Race, Gender, And The Body In Beauty Service Work



## **Synopsis**

Two women, virtual strangers, sit hand-in-hand across a narrow table, both intent on the same thing-achieving the perfect manicure. Encounters like this occur thousands of times across the United States in nail salons increasingly owned and operated by Asian immigrants. This study looks closely for the first time at these intimate encounters, focusing on New York City, where such nail salons have become ubiquitous. Drawing from rich and compelling interviews, Miliann Kang takes us inside the nail industry, asking such questions as: Why have nail salons become so popular? Why do so many Asian women, and Korean women in particular, provide these services? Kang discovers multiple motivations for the manicure-from the pampering of white middle class women to the artistic self-expression of working class African American women to the mass consumption of body-related services. Contrary to notions of beauty service establishments as spaces for building community among women, *The Managed Hand* finds that while tentative and fragile solidarities can emerge across the manicure table, they generally give way to even more powerful divisions of race, class, and immigration.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

âœOverall Kang has written an exceptionally well-argued, insightful book.â • (American Journal Of Sociology / AJS 2011-05-04)

"This book is a must read for women's studies and sociology classes on labor, migration and gender

as it provides its readers a rich and theoretically engaging discussion on feminine culture, the intersections of race, class, gender and migrant women's labor."; Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, Brown University "In *The Managed Hand*, Miliann Kang makes a significant contribution to the existing literature on Asian-American women, gender relations, service workers, beauty and the body. Based on fieldwork in nail salons, Kang reveals the social and emotional negotiations between and amongst women in that setting. We will never look at fingernails and what they tell us about ourselves in the same way again!"; Rebecca King-O'Riain, author of *Pure Beauty: Judging Race in Japanese American Beauty Pageants* "I enjoyed reading Kang's work so much that I felt disappointed when I finished. The book is a wonderful example of what sociology does best"; i.e., skillfully examining a relatively small site of interest, such that the analysis speaks not only to matters of individual experience and identity, but also to those of broader social and cultural processes and structures."; Debra L. Gimlin, author of *Body Work: Beauty and Self-Image in American Culture* "How did manicured nails become such ubiquitous symbols of feminine status? In this innovative and compelling ethnography, Kang unravels the many social consequences of the polished nail, bringing together insights from care work, ethnic enclave entrepreneurship, and gender and migration scholarship to illuminate the growing sector of body labor. All those who would dismiss manicured nails as socially irrelevant should read this book!"; Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, author of *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*

Kang does a great job at exploring the gendered relations of the workplace in New York City Korean-owned nail salons. This text was an interesting addition in a class about gender and labor, giving the unique perspective of the affective, emotional, and bodily labor required of manicurists in the course of their jobs.

Brand New! Great Book thank you so much!

I heard of this book through a friend and thought how interesting it might be to look behind the scenes of nail salons. It turned out that *The Managed Hand* revealed fascinating truths and stories about women on both sides of the manicure table. The mostly Asian immigrant women who do the work are on the front lines of racial and class and inter-female relations. Bridges are built between women of different backgrounds, but stereotypes also endure. I've never understood why so many women today go regularly to get manicures. Read this book and you'll know. Next time you go to a

nail salon, you'll see things differently, and hopefully you'll be successful at giving and getting respect in equal amounts. Nail salon manicurists work quickly at physically demanding yet precise tasks, under often toxic chemical conditions, and they must cater emotionally to their clients' conversational and pampering needs. They risk their bodies for those of other women. Why they do it, how they do it, and what they think of it are all in the book. The author writes clearly and compellingly, covering all sorts of gender, class, and race topics, but in a way that this layperson totally enjoyed and learned a lot from. Highly recommended!

Great book

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