

The Business of Leisure, the Leisure of Business: Rethinking Hegemonic Masculinity through Gendered Service in Tokyo Hostess Clubs

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Abstract

The representation of salarymen as hegemonic masculinity still dominates discourse about masculinity and power in Japan despite 20 years of recession and neoliberal economic reforms. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in hostess clubs, where salarymen seemingly perpetuate hegemonic models of masculinity vis-à-vis female hostesses, this article reexamines the gender dynamics of these clubs. Hostess clubs are often thought of as places where women are objectified and rendered subservient to men. Instead, my research reveals a more subtle dance of power relations taking place; men are investing the most emotional work whereas women are more often concerned with intra-gender tensions and power relations among themselves. I describe how complex intra-gender exchanges deflect and mitigate inter-gender exchanges by disrupting the simple ideological link between gender and power operating in this space.

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