White-collar men and masculinities in contemporary urban China


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<tr>
<td>AUTHORS</td>
<td>Hird, D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>This work investigates the characteristics of masculinity that are at the symbolic heart of China’s economic success, and of which the figure of the white-collar man is emblematic. Based on fieldwork observations, interview and media publications, it examines the gendered practices, aspirations and attitudes of men who identify with or aspire to white-collar status alongside discursive representations of the Chinese white-collar man, interrogating the links between practice and discourse. Drawing on various approaches to theorizing subjectivity, it argues that white-collar masculinity is performed in ways that suggest both radical shifts and continuities in understandings of gender, which challenge the prevalent teleological narrative of China’s modernization. The first chapter sets the scene for white-collar masculinity in the reform era and discusses fieldwork methodologies. Chapter two sets out the theoretical framework adopted to analyse the gendered white-collar subject, and examines academic literature on masculinities in China. Chapter three examines the ‘body culture’ of informants, and how they ‘bring themselves’ to white-collar discourse through attention to their bodies in areas of daily life such as dress, movement and hygiene. Chapters four and five look respectively at the production of corporate masculinity both inside and outside the office, through an exploration of business and leisure practices, and their overlap. Chapter six takes a close look at the young white-collar man as (heterosexual) boyfriend and husband and the final chapter investigates sexualisations of young urban middle-class males, and comments on their transformative possibilities.</td>
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