

Going out, sociability, and cultural distinctions

Author(s)

Torronen J, Maunu A

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Abstract

Aim:

Pubs are focal stages of sociability. This article investigates the identifications and distinctions between us and them, made by young Finns talking about their own behaviour in pubs, and the pubs they like and dislike.

Data & Method:

The data consists of 117 interviews with 23 to 35-year-old young Finnish adults who work in business or administration. The method applies classification analysis and is influenced by the structuralist, semiotic, and rhetoric traditions.

Results:

The analysis shows that many of the interviewees classifications involve distancing themselves from those people that go to superficial pubs. The interviewees distinguish themselves from those frequenting superficial places by classifying the interactions there as false and stiff, and contrary to a genuine and relaxed sociability. With these distinctions the interviewees do not aim to distinguish themselves as above others. Instead, they define themselves as ordinary people by separating themselves from people who are fake, pretentious, or too faddish.

Conclusions:

[This] opposition to superficiality and the emphasis on authenticity is reminiscent of Rousseau's criticism of trivial needs. The interviewees seem to define sociability in pubs in a way that valorises the virtues of ordinariness and modesty.

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