

Dragging identity: A critical ethnography of nightclub space(s)

Author(s)

Davis AM.

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Abstract

This study investigated the production of space within a nightclub that has weekly theme nights. Using critical ethnography and Butler's theory of performativity, the researcher studied the ways in which space was created on 80s, Drag, and Goth Nights. Through participant-observation and in-depth interviews with patrons and employees at the club, the researcher argued identity performances altered the social space of the club from night-to-night and suggested the space changed through the physical things in the space and the rules associated with that space. Performativity of space, like performativity of identity, occurred not through a single performance but through the constant and consistent repetition of performances over a period of time. Specifically, the history of the space (each night building on the night before for years and years) created a stability for the nightclub that remained regardless of the individuals within it. The specific theme nights, however, did not reap the benefits of that stability. Despite the site-specific (read theme-night specific) normative performances in the space, the social space was altered through individual performances in the space as well as rules associated with the club. Through identity performances and moments in the space happening over and over again across a period of time, the researcher discovered not only the performativity of space as relates to Club North, but also the applicability of performativity to other social spaces. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2009 APA, all rights reserved)

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