

IDENTITY AND ETHNICITY AMONG SAN DIEGO SALSA DANCERS

Jamie Lane Lynch

Mentor: Ramona L. Pérez, Ph.D.

This study explores the role ethnicity plays in the construction and performance of the San Diego Salsa dancer identity. This research utilizes Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital to expose the factors that indicate belonging within purported Salsa dance communities highlighting perceptions of authority, authenticity, and power. This is accomplished through the social process of constructing performance identity and demonstrates the variances depending upon self-reported ethnicity. This study utilizes participant observation and semi-structured interviews for qualitative methods. This research examines how people of varying ethnicities come together to associate in San Diego's Salsa clubs, how dancers gain ownership through skillful performance of dance movements, how people define authenticity among Salsa dancers, and how they construct their own Salsa identities through the lens of ethnicity.