

DRESS CODE POLICIES, RACE, EXCLUSION, AND THE CULTURAL ECONOMY
IN AUSTIN AND SAN MARCOS, TEXAS

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my Black sisters and brothers for risking their bodies and livelihood to speak our truth. I spent many sleepless nights wondering whether I should write a paper for Black equality or fearlessly join you all in arms. Even after completing this thesis, I am still have doubts about my choice. Nonetheless, I am overwhelmed with gratitude, inspiration, and courage. Black Lives Matter now and forever.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
ATX	Austin, Texas
SMTX	San Marcos, Texas
NTE	Night-time Economy

I. INTRODUCTION

The nightlife economy (NTE) is a profitable district for many U.S cities. The American NTE reports that nightclubs and bars account for \$783 billion in profit (American Nightlife Association 2020). Nightlife venues provide a space for ritualistic consumption and a sense of belonging for many young adults. Within the past several decades, economic and cultural changes have had a significant influence on creating these “urban playscapes” (Chatterton and Hollands 2002:95).

Some researchers argue the neoliberal production, regulation, and consumption required to create some NTE’s are consistent with Richard Florida’s (2002) creative class thesis. The creative class thesis states that “cities should position arts and cultural amenities as assets to attract highly educated, skilled, and mobile workers” (Grodach 2011:82). By prioritizing technology, talent, and tolerance, NTE urban landscaping primarily caters to the creative class of young professionals and college students. This cultural economy, influenced by gentrification, has changed the NTE to fit the entertainment and consumption needs of a more affluent, white demographic. According to Brandan Lavy, Erin Dascher, and Ronald Hagelman (2016), gentrification is the “displacement of lower-income families in deteriorating neighborhoods by middle and upper-class households (197). Like the examples described above, gentrified urban spaces portray neoliberal policies as cultural creativity (Lavy et al. 2016).

In catering to this demographic, nightlife venues have engaged in exclusionary practices. Several methods of racial, classist, sexist, and homophobic exclusion in the NTE have been addressed within recent academic research. A subtle but effective method of exclusion includes dress code policies that restrict participation in nightlife venues.

Many nightlife venues may enforce a formal or informal dress code policy that prohibits hip-hop clothing styles such as “athletic jeans, baggy jeans, oversized white T-shirts, sweat-bands, do-rags, ‘wife beaters’ and thick gold chains” (May and Chaplin 2007:60). Consequently, African American men experience disproportionate rates of exclusion from socializing in late-night urban spaces.

A substantial amount of academic research has focused on dress code policies in academia and the workplace, but there is notably less attention to the nightlife scene. Furthermore, no research has specifically concentrated on the NTE in central Texas area, such as Austin and San Marcos. Although several researchers have tracked Austin’s redevelopment changes from the creative city thesis and the ‘Keep Austin Weird’ identity (Grodach 2011; Shwanen, Aalst, and Timan 2012; Cabera 2019), there is a there is a lack of academic research that connects Austin’s cultural urban redevelopment, exceptionally liberal brand, and NTE dress code policies. Moreover, there has been little to no research of the culture of San Marcos, Texas (SMTX). This thesis seeks to fill this gap as well as extend the current research on dress code policies in the NTE.

In this paper, I examine the exclusionary processes of the dress codes within 62 nightlife venues in Austin and San Marcos, Texas. Austin, Texas (ATX) had 32 venues and SMTX had 30 venues. I analyzed 27,000 online reviews for evidence of exclusion from Facebook, Yelp , and Google. Out of the 27,000 online reviews, I collected a total of 523 that reflected on nightclub exclusion. The online reviews mostly reflect personal accounts of racial, classed, gendered, or sexual orientation discrimination at nightlife venues in ATX and SMTX. A smaller portion of reviews describes nightclub management or staff attitudes. I supplemented the reviews with participant observation

and two interviews with a patron and nightclub staff member.

I draw upon the theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989), colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva 2017), and several extended forms of cultural capital (Objectified, Embodied, and Sub-cultural) to analyze the discriminatory experiences of NTE exclusion in ATX and SMTX (Bourdieu 1986). I will first address the relationship between dress codes, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation in the NTE. Second, I will highlight how dress code policies reflect institutional forms of exclusion established into the NTE. Lastly, this thesis will challenge the notion of Austin's liberal exceptionalism and diversity. Specifically, I argue that Austin's identity as an advocate for exceptional diversity is a further extension of American 'post-racial' ideology (Long 2013; Tate 2015; Cabera 2019). In other words, ATX's exceptional liberalism reflects a colorblind-like attitude that denies their role in America's historical and contemporary racism. I will explain how dress code policies and other NTE methods of exclusion directly challenge this racially-exempt' attitude.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dress, Race and Criminality in America

On February 24th, 1996, President Bill Clinton published a memorandum encouraging school uniforms in response to the violent death of a Black student over \$86 basketball shoes (Clinton 1996; U.S Department of Education, 1996). Clinton (1996) warned public schools that students wearing designer clothing, fancy sneakers, gang colors, and insignias attract criminal activity such as gang violence, drugs, and weapons. In order to ensure public schools' safety, the federal government provided a 'manual on school uniforms.' Many state and local governments soon enforced or encouraged uniforms to deter criminal activity. Although academics and opponents questioned the correlation between uniforms and school safety, many supporters felt it improved student behavior, job skills, and self-esteem (Boutelle 2008).

The debate over violence and dress code policies, a "standard of clothing attire employed by a variety of institutions," continues in public discourse and academic research (May and Chaplin 2007: 59). On the one hand, some consider uniforms to be standard and necessary representations of "good citizenship in schools and society" (Foucault 1978; Aghasaleh 2018: 98). On the other hand, accusations of racism and sexism in workplace and school dress codes resist conforming to white, male expectations (Aghasaleh 2018; May 2018). Uniforms for women often impose feminine modesty while also appearing attractive for the male gaze (Arkles 2012). However, dress code expectations extend further than merely a uniform in a professional environment. For instance, the tragic death of Trayvon Martin in 2012 sparked a national debate about the association of Blackness, criminality, and even clothes he was wearing (Aghasaleh

2018). As Fox News commentator Geraldo Rivera argued on Fox and Friends in response to Martin's death (NBC News 2012; Agashleh 2018):

“I am urging the parents of Black and Latino youngsters, particularly, to not let their children go out wearing hoodies. I think the hoodie is as much responsible for Trayvon Martin's death as George Zimmerman was. When you see a kid walking down the street, particularly a dark-skinned kid like my son Cruz... he was constantly yelled at... 'take that hood off, people look at you and what do they think'? It's those crime scene surveillance tapes: every time you see someone sticking up a 7/11, the kid's wearing a hoodie.”

Aghasaleh (2018) argues against this, stating the American clothing store American Apparel sells hoodies to all populations (including dogs), and it was Trayvon's race and gender that made him seem dangerous. The interpretation of Black and Brown bodies as threatening, especially wearing casual or hip-hop clothing, is not uncommon in the NTE. Yet nightlife venues are less scrutinized for their dress code policies since the environment is infamous for risky behavior, disorderly conduct, and violence (Hobbs, Hadfield, Lister, and Winlow 2003; Talbot 2004).

Dress Code Policies in the Night-time Economy

Nightlife dress codes allow access based on a specific style and taste, which may reflect an individual or group's identity, culture, or consumption patterns (Bourdieu 1986; May 2014). May (2014) claims “self-presentation is complicated by race for those Black nightlife participants selecting hip-hop styles of dress...” (71). Although hip-hop

styles are ingrained in popular culture, the urban styles originated from poor, young Black, and Latino groups (May 2014). Nighttime venues utilize dress codes to discreetly expel the presumed criminal behavior associated with working-class Black and Brown male youth (May and Chaplin 2007; Measham and Hadfield 2009; Rivera 2010; Kim 2014; May 2014; Sogaard 2018). In other words, nightclubs engage in “distinct, almost fascistic, notions of social purity and ethnic cleansing” for safety and business practices (Measham and Hadfield 2009:383). May’s (2014) ethnographic research terms this phenomenon in the NTE as “integrated segregation” (May 2014:70) Integrated segregation maintains racial, classed, and gendered social boundaries with minimal conflict (May 2014).

May (2018) conducted a content analysis of 113 news reports of African American’s experience of entry denial into nightlife venues. He discovered four racially discriminatory patterns within these dress code infractions: 1) a ban styles of dress worn by African Americans, 2) the prohibition of African-American owned brands 3) differential enforcement of dress code policies by race and gender, 4) prohibition of hairstyles that are typically worn by African Americans.

Rivera’s (2010) ethnographic study of nightclub bouncers supports these findings. According to her interviews, a bouncer admitted that African American or American Latino men wearing baggy pants’ or ‘Timberland boots’ are not likely to be admitted in the nightclub because they are a security threat. However, even racial minorities who comply with the dress code policy may still be excluded. For example, Sogaard’s (2018) ethnographic research of nightclub bouncers and management in Denmark confirms May’s findings. In Sogaard’s (2018) research, a Danish Nightclub owner said if he allows

too many immigrants, even if they are ‘good,’ the venue’s reputation will become lower-class.

When patronizing non-white nightclubs or interacting with non-White bouncers, race may still play a significant role in exclusion, even in non-white nightclubs or bouncers. Helen Kim (2014) demonstrates this in her ethnographic study of a London desi-nightclub. She found young desi-men dressed in sports or casual fashion were denied entry because this attire symbolizes working-class youth or criminality. However, May (2018) argues that even though African American clubs reject Hip-hop or athletic clothing, their exclusionary practices are more class-based than racially influenced. In other words, they are not racially-discriminating when they deny African American patrons for wearing hip-hop clothing because the population is a majority African American. Aghasaleh (2018) challenges this idea in her analysis of school dress code policies. She argues that when non-white, non-middle class, and female bodies are associated with otherness, even those belonging to the same racial group can reproduce oppressive values. Additionally, a Black bouncer in Rivera’s (2010) study revealed that Black patrons are scrutinized more harshly because of the kinds of brands they wear, such as Fubu, Mecca, and Phat Farm.

While Whites do not have to concern themselves with racist discrimination, they may still be denied for a dress code violation. White, middle-class dress reflects a patron’s willingness to spend, the ability to maintain the nightclub’s upscale reputation, attract desirability from other patrons, and less trouble (Rivera 2010). Additionally, clothes are used to determine class because while working-class people attempt to mimic the clothes of the elite, lower-class clothes are rarely imitated (Simmel 1957; May 2014).

Thus, May (2018) reports that it is not unusual to see nightlife venues prohibit flip flops, bathing suits, and baseball caps. It is important to note that White patrons wearing hip-hop style clothing are not judged with the same intensity as the non-White counterparts (Rivera 2010).

Furthermore, nightlife dress code policies also regulate gender and sexual orientation. A vast majority of NTE research supports the finding that men are almost exclusively affected by dress code policies (Grazian 2004; May and Chaplin 2007; Kim 2014; May 2014; Sogaard 2017; May 2018). Except as bartenders, men typically dominate the NTE as patrons, bouncers, and nightclub owners (Grazian 2004; May and Chaplin 2007). Gender performance for men typically includes sexually objectifying women, which can intensify in the sexually charged nightlife space. According to David Grazian's (2004) analysis of nightlife culture, men ritually pursue women and engage in conspicuous consumption to increase their masculinity status.

The clothes men wear are supposed indicators of their financial status and approachability. Men who appear to look like they are low-spenders or may make women uncomfortable can be denied access. On the other hand, women are rarely denied access unless they are wearing clothing that does not satisfy the male gaze. In other words, women must appear heterosexual and open to the advancements of heterosexual men. According to Kim (2014), a dress code enforcing women to wear revealing clothing is not necessary as many women will self-regulate and comply with standards of female attractiveness. The absence of a specific dress code for women is arguably unique to the NTE since many institutions enforce female modesty (Brower 2013).

Nightclubs strategically use dress codes to entice conventionally attractive

women, attracting the attention of gender-performing men. Nightclubs profit primarily from heterosexual and gendered rituals between young men and women. Interestingly, a quantitative study of nightlife rhythms in the Netherlands reported that gender-based inclusion and non-white inclusion had an inverse relationship (Schwanen, Aalst, and Timan 2012). Specifically, nightlife venues that had increased security encouraged more lone women to maneuver through the NTE but deterred racial minorities (Schwanen et al. 2012).

While dress code policies are significant for exclusion, bouncers make the final decision on nightclub accessibility (Liempt and Aalst 2016). Specifically, bouncers are in positions of power to decide whether to enforce or permit dress code violations. For instance, Rivera (2010) observed that friends of bouncers or management were never denied entry, even if they violated dress code policies. Accessibility was also granted if dress-violating men were accompanied by multiple women (Rivera 2010). May (2014) adds that celebrity status, such as being the university football star, may also be granted access regardless of dress or race. All of these methods of inclusion are ultimately motivated by social status and financial gain (Rivera 2010; Søggaard 2017).

In similar ways to police, bouncers “construct in-group masculine identities in relation to their peers through rhetorical expressions of prejudiced beliefs (Waddington 1999; Søggaard 2017:261). Interestingly, the culture of protecting the viability of club venues are shared by a community of bouncers, police, and closed-circuit television (CCTV) (Liempt and Aalst 2016). Van Liempt and Van Aalst (2016) claim that the collaboration of private and public surveillance has allowed bouncers more freedom to ‘protect’ public streets alongside police. As noted before, the intense presence of

surveillance encourages nightlife participation from young professionals and women but deters racial minorities (Schwanen et al. 2012). The marriage between private (bouncers) and public (police) surveillance reflects the institutional strategies that maintain exclusion across racial, gendered, and classed boundaries.

Policy, Cultural Development and Regulation in the Night-time Economy

Within recent decades, gentrification and corporatization processes have influenced the cultural rebranding of the NTE (Chatterton and Hollands 2001; Measham and Hadfield 2009; Talbot 2004; Bose 2005; Talbot and Bose 2007). This ‘new urbanism’ reflects “...a new city cultural brand which, although stressing the cosmopolitan and culturally diverse nature of cities, is largely directed towards mobile, non-local and corporate capital, property developers and high-income urban-livers and professional workers” (Savage 1995; Webster 2001; Chatterton and Hollands 2001:97). In other words, nightlife districts cater to younger, wealthier groups and repel less privileged groups through policy, regulation, and surveillance.

For example, Talbot’s (2004) case study of the London nightlife district highlights how urban renewal projects reflect institutional racism and segregation. Non-White venues were more at risk for intense police surveillance, gaining criminal reputations, and lack of monetary funds from local government (Talbot 2004). Consequently, racial minority venues were slowly replaced with culturally rebranded entertainment spots that attracted an affluent, White demographic. Additional institutional measures have taken place to deter non-Whites from nightlife participation, such as the criminalization of ‘black music’ and ‘no-cruising policies.’

Although hip-hop is known to be played in popular venues, there are regulations on who, when, and what songs may be played (May and Chaplin 2007; Hadfield and Measham 2009). Martina Bose's (2005) ethnographic research in Manchester supports this finding by highlighting how non-White venues had to argue with police to be allowed to play 'Black music' like other White venues. Furthermore, cruising laws, normally regulated by police, limit how often a car can be seen circling the nightlife district (May and Chaplin 2007).

The creation of the new cultural NTE sets the stage for racial and classed exclusion, followed by more direct and informal methods such as dress codes. In other words, dress code policies reject the remaining patrons that were not initially deterred by the discrete institutional methods of exclusion. Austin, Texas, known for its exceptionally liberal brand and gentrification, is an example of the creative NTE.

The ATX cultural economy collected \$4 billion in revenue in 2010, which "encompasses fields ranging from the nonprofit visual and performing arts to commercial sectors such as film and music" (Grodach 2011: 81; Kanin 2012; Tate 2015). Revenue produced from the cultural economy has likely increased since then due to the booming population (Cabera 2019). Maggie Tate's book (2015) details the historical and contemporary reality of racial and classist inequality against its "hip, creative, tolerant city of popular lore that is characterized in the phrase 'Keep Austin Weird.'" (21). The 'Keep Austin Weird' motto was originally created by local business owners to resist large corporations infiltrating the city (Long 2013).

However, the brand has been adopted by the same large corporations as a means to market a tolerant and diverse brand (Long 2013). Yet, Austin is one of the most

racially divided cities in the United States (Lemon 2016). Austin is also the only major city to have exponential growth while also experiencing a decline in the black population (Tang 2014; Tate 2015). Nevertheless, according to Sergio Cabera's (2019) interviews with Austin locals about diversity, Whites living in gentrified areas strongly believe they are living in entirely racially diverse neighborhoods.

Maggie Tate (2015) and Carl Grodach (2011) examine how the creative class thesis has impacted the urban landscape and cultural policy of ATX (Richard Florida 2002). Grodach (2011) explains that three key factors have contributed to Austin's cultural development: a technology-hub economy, culture and arts development, and renowned music scene. The creative class thesis has significantly influenced Austin's redevelopment plans and policies, such as the City's Smart Growth Initiative (Grodach 2011). The City policy invested millions of dollars into building new studios in downtown for Austin City Limits, an annual music festival, which successfully attracted the desired commercial and residential attention. This economic growth triggered a wave of gentrification and other inequalities within the city (Grodach 2011), but there is a notable lack of academic research dedicated to connecting Austin's cultural urban redevelopment, exceptionally liberal brand, and NTE dress code policies. Moreover, SMTX has little to no academic research dedicated to the same subject. This thesis seeks to fill this gap as well as extend the current research on dress code policies in the NTE. While many researchers have focused on interviews and participant observation, this paper will offer a unique approach by utilizing a content analysis.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a powerful tool that feminist and anti-racist scholars utilize to analyze identity and exclusion (Crenshaw 1989; Nash 2008). The term originated to highlight “the various ways race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s experiences” (Nash 2008:2). First, intersectionality destabilizes race/gender binaries to analyze identity in a complex social processes. Second, it offers a vocabulary to use against critiques of identity politics. Lastly, intersectionality focuses on the historical and current impact of multiplied exclusion of various identities.

The current literature demonstrates Crenshaw’s intersectionality theory by highlighting the formal and informal methods of exclusion on various identities. Rivera’s (2010) study of bouncers lists the patron groups that are most to least likely to gain admittance into a nightlife venue. At the top of the list, regulars or friends of the nightclub staff are almost guaranteed inclusion. However, nonnetworked “new faces” must meet several criteria before being admitted (Rivera 2010:248). According to Rivera, White men are first judged according to the number of accompanying women and then dress code . In contrast, non-White men are first judged on dress, accent, then number of accompanying women.

I use the intersectionality framework to analyze accessibility or exclusion based on varying identities of race, class and gender. These identities (race, class, and gender) are rarely judged in isolation. For instance, if a patron is White, their race will not negatively impact their ability to gain access. If the patron is a working-class male, they may still be denied for not appearing affluent. However, the more marginalized identities

that a patron possesses may increase the likelihood of entry denial. Dress code policies mostly reflect the experiences of Black and Brown males wearing casual or hip-hop clothing, illustrating the intersectionality of race and class.

Cultural Capital: Embodied, Objectified, and Sub-cultural

Cultural capital, as defined by Bourdieu, is the cultural knowledge and tastes reflected within a social stratification system. The use of cultural capital is a significant factor within dress code policies and nightclub accessibility. More specific forms of cultural capital include objectified and embodied cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital refers to the communicative patterns and physical characteristics, such as race, while objectified cultural capital describes material objects (Bourdieu 1984; Shilling 1993; Rivera 2010). For example, bouncers attribute status and cultural stereotypes to the embodied cultural capital of patrons such as race, accent, language, and movement. The objectified material, such as certain affluent brands and luxury items, are also judged before gaining entry. The concepts of objectified and embodied cultural capital are ideal for analyzing dress code policies because the policies rely on visible and cultural cues to give or deny access.

May (2014) Rivera (2010), Bose (2005), and Measham and Hadfield (2009) apply Bourdieu's theory to describe how styles of dress use cultural cues to distinguish between accepted and rejected groups. In other words, the "selection of particular styles then becomes a sort of cultural identity embedded with indicators for both the wearer and those viewing the attire" (May and Chaplin 2007:60). Rivera (2010) claims that door staff believed hip hop fashion symbolized criminal behavior. Embodied cultural capital (race,

ethnicity, and access) reflected the level of threat, such as attempting to distinguish between the accents of US-born and foreign-born Latinos. Rivera also mentions that maintaining the upscale image of the club is the most important. Therefore, patrons who project affluence, attractiveness, youth, and trendiness are permitted. This is usually determined by a quick judgement of visible cues such as attire, speech, attitude, and even walking style.

Rivera (2010) states that the discriminatory enforcement is partially motivated to maintain an upscale image for the venue. Therefore, patrons that embody affluence, attractiveness, youth, and trendiness are more likely to be permitted. White middle-class patrons possess the desired embodied and objectified cultural capital more than racial minorities (May 2014). Patrons who do not possess this cultural capital are considered lacking or even a threat to the safety of the desirable patrons (Kim 2014). The patrons that exhibit non-dominant culture or sub-cultural traits will tend to be labeled as ‘undesirable’ and excluded, which usually tend to be African American or Latinx males wearing Hip-Hop clothing. However, there are incidents in which the lack of cultural capital can be made up with economic capital (extra fee) or number of accompanied women (Rivera 2010).

I also use Sarah Thornton’s (1995) concept of subcultural capital to analyze a “situation where individuals were able to access economic capital through their presumed connection with an alternative or bohemian sections of society” (Talbot and Bose 2007:100). Measham and Hadfield (2009) demonstrated subcultural dress code expectations at an alternative nightclub in London. The patron, a male, was denied entry because he was not ‘funky’ enough despite proving he had purchased his shirt from a

local vintage store. This demonstrates that sub-cultural clothing can be converted into objectified cultural capital for access to alternative spaces.

Although hip-hop style can be interpreted as a subculture as well, it is rejected from many night-life venues. However, Marcus Hunter (2010) argues that African Americans do not lack social or cultural capital. Instead, African Americans utilize many forms of capital within their own local nightclubs to find jobs, childcare, and romance interests. He demonstrates how Black-dominant spaces “confirm shared values and can support cultural cohesion within race” (Hunter 2010:167).

Color-Blindness

Bonilla-Silva’s (2017) color-blindness theory of racism refers to the racial rhetoric that ignores the historical and contemporary effects of racism which maintains white supremacy in America. Four central feature of color-blind frames that reflect several White ideologies about race inequality in America: abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism. Bonilla-Silva (2017) describes as using philosophical liberalism to justify racial inequalities while ignoring historical and contemporary effects of racism. Naturalization is perceiving racial patterns as natural phenomena rather than historical, sociopolitical, and institutional discrimination against racial minorities. Cultural racism argues that racial minorities are culturally inferior rather than biologically inferior, suggesting that Blacks’ culturally-defined behavior is the reason for their position. Lastly, the minimization of race denies that race is a significant influence in the lives of African Americans.

Most dress code policies in the existing literature reflect the colorblind frames of

abstract liberalism or minimization of race. May (2018) argues that colorblindness is the most significant and effective justification for dress code policies targeting mostly hip-hop clothing. Although they do not specify race, findings from previous literature has identified a pattern between dress codes and the exclusion of Black and Brown men (Talbot and Bose 2007; Measham and Hadfield 2009; Kim 2014; May 2014; Søgaaard 2017).

Additionally, May (2018) describes how nightclub staff and management attempt to focus on the clothing associated with crime rather than racial minorities wearing them. Specifically, nightclub management describe how they are not discriminating against African American communities if the dress code policies also turn away Whites too. Additionally, according to some venue owners, they hire African American employees or are people of color themselves so they cannot be racially discriminating. This color-blind attitude resembles the storyline ‘some of my best friends are Black’ which is an attempt to deflect accusations of racial prejudice. Bonilla-Silva (2017) describes a story-line as “the socially shared tales that are fable-like and incorporate a common scheme and wording” (97). Discriminatory story-lines about racial minorities appear truthfully because they are consistently told and re-told within the racially dominant group (Bonilla-Silva 2017). Opponents who challenge these storylines may be met with resistance because it questions White’s perception of racialized reality.

The NTE is often a neglected area of scrutiny in terms of racial inequality and dress code policies. The frames of colorblind racism are a useful tool to debunk the normalization of racial segregation in the NTE. Following the existing literature, I use combine the frames of minimization of race and storylines to analyze dress code policies

as that reflects the current literature.

Research Questions

1. How do racial minorities experience dress code policies at nightlife venues?
2. How is the development and structure of the NTE related to racial exclusion in nightlife venues?
3. How are dress code policies related to the overall culture of ATX and SMTX?

IV. METHODS

Research Sites

The Austin-San Antonio, Texas, metropolitan region is one of the fastest-growing areas in recent years (Lavy et al 2016; U.S. Census 2014). Since 1950, the population has been doubling in size every twenty years (Cabera 2019). According to the 2019 U.S. Census, the population is estimated to be over 978,000 people with a 48% White population. The population for people of color is 8% African American, 7% Asian, and 34% Latinx. Austin's population has been influenced for a variety of reasons related to the interrelation of gentrification, cultural economy, and the University of Texas which has over 50,000 students (UT Austin).

The nightlife economy stretches across different parts of the city with the most popular areas known as Sixth Street, East Austin, North Austin, Rainey Street, and South Congress. The central downtown area (Sixth, East, Rainey, and SoCo) attracts large crowds of college students, young professionals, and tourists. Sixth street in particular is notoriously known for its college-party scene. The street is closed to traffic every evening with a large population of police on foot, cars, and horses observing the busy street. Bouncers are also concentrated along the sidewalks and in doorways along the narrow nightlife venues along the street. During my participant observation, I did not witness any other nightlife districts with police surveillance. Rainey Street, a gentrified area with a majority of White patrons, did not have any visible police or obvious bouncers.

My second research site was San Marcos, Texas, which is home to the fourth largest University in Texas with 38,000 students. The population is estimated to be over 64,000 people with 48% White, 40% Latinx, 2% Asian, and 6% African American or

Black. There is currently no extensive sociological research on social inequality in San Marcos. According to the city of San Marcos, a ‘Downtown Master Plan’ was initiated in 2008 to restore the urban landscape. The plan includes attracting corporate businesses, officers, student housing complexes, and entertainment industry (City of San Marcos 2020). A majority of the downtown area caters to college students including the nightlife district, whose businesses earn roughly 46 million annually (American Nightlife Association 2020).

I focused on the largest nightlife district which is a strip of venues that encircle the Town Square. Although there are alternative nightlife venues scattered throughout the city, the downtown area has the largest concentration of bars and nightclubs. Many nightlife venues are in close proximity to one another with large crowds of college students. Unlike Austin, Texas, the streets in SMTX are not closed even during busy nights and have less police on standby. These cities were chosen they have a bustling nightlife, relatively diverse populations, and evidence of varying degrees of gentrification (Grodach 2011; KTSW 2016; Austin Monitor 2020).

Data

I originally intended to collect between 12-15 patron and bouncer interviews and supplement these data with a sample of online sources. However, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented me from conducting interviews, so I have made my online content analysis as my primary source of data. Prior to Covid-19, I was able to interview two participants: a bartender and a nightclub patron. For my primary data, I searched online for ‘nightclubs and bars’ in ATX and SMTX, identifying 62 venues. Out of these venues, I categorized 6 venues as ‘alternative venues’. I used May’s (2018) criteria for alternative

venues, which “cater to a specific clientele or have become associated with particular subgroups that fall outside of the mainstream clientele” (36).

I then searched the Yelp, Google, and Facebook pages of these venues and gathered 27, 384 online reviews. From these I identified a total of 523 reviews that accused nightlife venues of any discriminatory act (race, gender, sexual orientation, class etc.) with a primary focus on dress code policies. I used these 523 online reviews for further analysis which consisted of all forms of exclusion, including dress code policy exclusion.

I utilized ethnographic content analysis to analyze themes within my interviews and online data. Ethnographic content analysis is a reflexive method for concepts, data collection and analysis (Atheide 2003). Specifically, it allows for a context-sensitive analysis, traditional coding, and identification and examination of emergent patterns. For the online reviews, I coded for every time a reviewer accused the venue of racism. I also coded each time a patron said that a venue’s discriminatory behaviors did not reflect Austin/San Marcos values (“Austin/SMTX is Liberal”). For every venue, I coded for three primary situations: dress code exclusion, inconsistent dress code enforcement, and accusations of racism. Each time a particular clothing item was prohibited, I coded for dress code exclusion, including the identity of who was wearing it when that information was made available. Each time the reviewer said that they witnessed other patrons allowed inside despite wearing similar items I coded for inconsistent dress code enforcement. Finally, each time a venue was accused of being racially discriminating I coded for accusations of racism. Utilizing ethnographic content analysis, all of the

following themes emerged within the data. However, most reflected similar themes or patterns in previous literature except for the category Austin/San Marcos is Liberal.

First, I separated venues into the following categories: 1) Austin: No Formal Policy, 2) Austin: Formal Policy, 3) San Marcos: No Formal Policy, 4) San Marcos: Formal Policy. Within these four categories, I coded each review using the following categories: 1) Exclusion Accusations, Violent/Confrontational/Insult Discrimination Accusations, Upcharge in Fees Accusations, and Lack of Diverse Music Accusations. Venues with formal policies were either observed on-site or online. Nightlife venues without formal policies had no visible dress code policy, or it was only accessible from informally asking a bouncer. I collected 5 (1 ATX and 4 SMTX) dress code policies from bouncers in person or over the phone. For those venues without an accessible dress code policy from formal or informal sources, I assembled a dress code policy using the criteria identified from the venue's review pages.

The Exclusion Accusations include first-hand experiences or witnesses' accounts of exclusion, which mostly reflect dress code violations. I listed every clothing or accessory item that was supposedly responsible for the exclusion. Next, I compiled a list of prohibited dress/items and compared them to the venue's formal dress code.

Violent/Confrontational/Insult Discrimination Accusations describe bouncers/management that violently confronts or insults minority groups. This category also includes when police are called to assist in disputes.

Upcharge in Fees Accusations includes charges being unequally distributed based on race or gender, such as a cover-charge to gain entry despite a dress code violation. The Lack of Diverse Music includes highlights accusations of stifling diverse music to

cater to a White population. All of these reviews strictly follow experiences related to exclusion or rejection of intersectional identities, with a strong emphasis on race and dress code violations. These categories help code for colorblind frames, cultural capital (embodied, objectified, and sub-cultural), and intersectionality.

I created three categories for inconsistencies within dress code enforcement: Inconsistent Dress Code Enforcement, Austin/San Marcos is Liberal, Online vs. On-site Dress Codes. Inconsistent dress code enforcement includes people's observations and accounts of bouncers/management inconsistently enforcing policies depending on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. The Austin/San Marcos is Liberal category reflects every time a patron says that the particular venue does not reflect the city-specific 'liberal' identity. Lastly, I analyzed dress code policies that posted different formal on-site versus online dress codes. I also Google searched for news articles on venues with abnormal patterns in reviews (i.e. high rates of racism accusations with low dress code discrimination). This helped me assess whether reviewers posting racism accusations were motivated by local news or their own experiences/observations.

In addition to online reviews, I conducted two interviews with one nightclub staff and one patron. I used pseudonyms for both subjects' names and any specific nightlife venue they mentioned. Christian, a young African-American male from ATX, had experienced multiple occasions of exclusion from nightlife venues for dress code violations. The nightclub staff Joshua, a young Latinx and White male, worked as a bartender at a SMTX nightlife venue. The interview guide was largely influenced by Lauren Rivera's (2010) interviews with bouncers. Since there were minimal interviews, I compared both interviewees experience's, behaviors, and attitudes to the reviews. To

code the interviews, I read through each interview and coded the data and which reflected themes within the data.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: ATX Venues With Formal Dress Code: Enforcement, Racism Accusations and Liberal Idealism

Venue (V)	Dress Code (DC)	# Patrons Denied	DC Inconsistencies	Racism Accusations	ATX is Liberal
BT2 (Gay V)	Casual	-	-	-	-
One-2-One Bar	Casual	-	-	-	-
Ceilo Nightclub (Latinx V)	Dressy	1	3	-	-
Collete (Private V)	Restrictive	-	-	-	-
Detour/Detour 290	Casual	-	-	1	-
Elysium (Goth V)	Tolerant	-	-	-	-
Kung Fu Saloon	Restrictive	8	4	16	6
Pete's Dueling Bar	Restrictive & Casual	-	-	2	-
Rain on 4th (Gay V)	Restrictive	3	-	-	1
RIO	Dress to impress	10	4	3	8
Rooftop on 6th	Casual	8	3	9	3
Rose Room	Restrictive (men)	18	10	9	3
Star Bar	Restrictive	-	-	3	-
The Aquarium	Restrictive	4	1	1	-
The Library	Restrictive	6	-	3	-
The Lit Lounge	Restrictive & Dressy	-	1	1	1
The Chuggin Monkey	Restrictive & Casual	1	1	1	3
Wild West (County V)	Restrictive	12	6	1	-
Wonderbar	Restrictive	12	9	5	2
77 Degrees	Restrictive	45	22	39	14
Total		128	64	94	41

Table 2: SMTX Venues without Formal Dress Code: Enforcement, Racism Accusations and Liberal Idealism

Venue (V)	Dress Code (DC)	# Patrons Denied	DC Inconsistencies	Racism Accusations	SMTX is Liberal
Chance's R	N/A	-	-	-	-
Fox Den	N/A	-	-	-	-
Freddy C's Lounge	N/A	-	-	-	-
Full Moon Saloon	N/A	-	-	-	-
Industry	N/A	-	-	-	-
Nebula Hookah Lounge	N/A	-	-	-	-
The Growling	N/A	-	-	-	-
Vodka Street	N/A	-	-	-	-
The I Don't Know Bar	N/A	1	-	-	-
Jacks Roadhouse	N/A	-	-	1	-
Mayloo's	N/A	1	-	-	-
Nephew's	N/A	2	-	1	-
Railyard Bar and Grill	N/A	-	-	-	-
Showdown	N/A	-	-	1	-
Stonewall Warehouse	N/A	-	-	1	-
Taproom	N/A	2	-	-	1
The Porch	N/A	2	-	-	-
The Vault/Sake	N/A	-	-	1	-
Treffs	N/A	1	-	4	-
Totals		9	-	9	1

Table 3: SMTX Venues with Formal Dress Code: Enforcement, Racism Accusations and Liberal Idealism

Venue (V)	Dress Code (DC)	# Patrons Denied	DC Inconsistencies	Racism Accusations	SMTX is Liberal
Black Rabbit	Restrictive	4	-	-	-
Cats Billiards	Restrictive	5	-	-	-
Daq Beach Bar	Casual	-	-	2	-
Harpers/Veranda	Restrictive	4	3	1	1
Shade Rooftop	Restrictive	2	1	-	-
Rooftop on the Square	Restrictive	7	1	4	1
The Marc	Restrictive	1	-	-	-
Axis	Restrictive	-	-	-	-
Green Parrot	Restrictive	-	-	-	-
Gray Horse Saloon	Casual	-	-	-	-
Zelicks	Casual	-	-	-	-
Total		23	5	7	2

Table 4: ATX Venues without Formal Dress Code: Enforcement, Racism Accusations and Liberal Idealism

Venue (V)	Dress Code (DC)	# Patrons Denied	DC Inconsistencies	Racism Accusations	ATX is Liberal
Canary Roost	N/A	-	-	9	1
Concrete Cowboy	N/A	3	3	2	-
The Dogwood	N/A	25	10	14	5
Wonderbar	N/A	15	3	4	2
Green Light Social	N/A	14	4	8	2
Hangar Lounge	N/A	3	2	1	4
Midnight Cowboy	N/A	-	-	-	1
POP	N/A	2	-	10	1
Pour Choices	N/A	-	-	-	2
Sellers	N/A	1	2	-	1
Underground					
Unbarlievable	N/A	0	0	32	2
Totals		63	24	48	21

The tables shown above illustrate how methods of exclusion, accusations of racism, and attitudes towards the city's liberalism. Table 4 portrays ATX venues without a formal policy, yet reviewers posted several incidents of dress code exclusion and racism. Out of these venues, the Dogwood had the highest number of patrons denied for dress code (25), dress code enforcement inconsistencies (10), and Austin is Liberal attitudes (5). Unbarlievable had the highest reports of racism accusations (32). However, the high rate of racism accusations may have been influenced by media coverage of racial discrimination (Austin Eater 2013; Austin Eater 2017). The Wonderbar and Green Light Social also have higher rates in all four categories. The Dogwood and the Wonderbar are located in an affluent shopping and residential area. The Green Light Social is located on 6th street, the largest downtown nightlife districts.

Table 1 illustrates the ATX venues with formal policies. 77 Degrees had the highest reported incidents of dress code exclusion (45), racism accusations (22), dress code enforcement inconsistencies (39), and Austin is Liberal attitude (14). The Rose Room also had relatively high rates within all four categories, except for racism accusations. The Kung Fu Saloon had the second highest rate for racism accusations (16), but also had media coverage over racial discrimination (Austin Eater 2013). 77 Degrees, The Rose Room, and Kung Fu Saloon are also located within the same affluent shopping district as The Wonderbar and Green Light Social. Interestingly, the same shopping district received local media coverage for releasing a racially discriminating brochure that stated they preferred only specific races (Anglo, Jewish or Asians) as customers (The Daily Dot 2018).

Most ATX nightlife venues that have casual or tolerant dress code policies have

lowest reports across all four categories. The alternative nightclubs (Gay Clubs, Latinx Club, Private NC, Goth Club, and Country Club) varied in reports of dress code exclusion and racism accusations. The Country Club Wild West had the highest accusations of dress code exclusion (12) and dress code inconsistencies (9). Notably, many of the dress code violations focused on flip-flops and hats, suggesting a class-based enforcement. The rest of the alternative venues had minimal or no reports. In total, ATX had 191 dress code exclusion reports, 88 dress code inconsistencies, 142 racism accusations, and 62 Austin is Liberal attitudes.

Table 3 lists all SMTX venue with and without formal dress code policies. Venues that enforced a hip-hop restrictive dress code policy had the highest rates across all four categories. Specifically, The Rooftop on the Square had the highest number of patrons denied for dress code (7) and racism accusations (4). The Rooftop on the Square is also owned by the same owner for Rooftop on 6th street and Unbarlievable, which has received major social media criticism for discriminatory comments posted online (Austin Eater 2017). Treffs Bar had an equally high rate of racism accusations (4), which is located away from the main nightlife district. Harpers/The Veranda had the highest rate of Dress code inconsistencies (3). A majority of SMTX venues have minimal or no reports of exclusion, especially for venues that have casual or no formal policies. Overall, SMTX 41 reports of dress code exclusion, 5 dress code inconsistencies, 16 racism accusations, and 3 SMTX is liberal reports.

Overall, it is important to note that SMTX had significantly less online reviews than ATX venues. This could be from the fact that SMTX has less nightclub participation compared to ATX, which has several nightlife districts throughout the city. SMTX night-

life district primarily caters to college-students, which even enforces a student ID policies in a few popular nightclubs. ATX has several different night-life districts that cater to students as well as other demographics throughout the city.

ATX nightlife venues had higher rates across all four categories. However, a pattern unique to ATX was the amount of reviewers who expressed shock, disappointment, or frustration at the venue's failure to portray 'Austin values' or liberal ideology. SMTX had only three instances of a similar attitude yet it was expressed much differently than ATX. Specifically, the SMTX reviews expressed a discrepancy between a college-town and discrimination. Even though ATX has a significant student population as well, the city culture itself was emphasized as non-discriminatory rather than college culture.

My analysis suggests that dress code policies are a non-confrontational and effective method to deny entry into nightlife venues. Additionally, the intersectionality between race, class, and gender appear to be significant factors in getting rejected for dress code policies. Although there were 523 collected reviews, the reviews and interviews revealed patterns similar to those found within the existing literature. Specifically, Black and Brown men are disproportionately excluded from nightlife participation (Rivera 2010; May 2018). Half of the 62 nightlife venues (31) had at least one review that had observed or experienced exclusion for wearing hip-hop, casual, athletic, or working-class attire. Although race is never explicitly addressed in dress code policies, my analysis revealed that race is significant in the following ways:

1. Dress code policies almost always exclude based on hip-hop attire, which is mostly worn by African American males

2. Only racial minorities claimed they experienced racial discrimination due to dress code violations, whereas Whites did not explicitly state race as a factor in their exclusion.
3. Bouncers and staff showed racial bias when enforcing dress code policies
4. There was inconsistent (differential) enforcement based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation

These patterns are evident through dress codes and other methods of maintaining exclusion such as violence, security, music, and upcharge in fees. Additionally, the NTE's structure also revealed a bias in how the colorblind attitude of the city further distances itself from the reality of racial segregation. Through these methods, the intersectionality and cultural capital of the patron may influence their chances of accessibility. Additionally, the frames of colorblind used within dress code policies and bouncers make it difficult to challenge racial segregation within the NTE.

Intersectionality and Cultural Capital

32 out of 62 venues, which accounts for 469 out of 523 reviews, accused management or staff of discriminating against racial minorities, regardless of a formal policy. Out of these 32 venues, 20 of them also had reports of excluding patrons based on a dress code policy. For example, a male reviewer of unknown racial identity described an interaction between himself and a bouncer at a popular nightclub in SMTX. According to the reviewer, the bouncer said he could not get into the venue because the Timberland boots made him look "ghetto" and that they were "n*gger shoes." The rejected patron then frustratingly complained that he was "not even African American."

This interaction suggests that particular clothing types, such as Timberland boots, are associated with working-class African Americans. This connection was confirmed by the reviewer who, although not Black, attempted to distance himself and his choice of shoes from that association. As previous research has indicated, the culture of urban Black and Brown people, reflected in style and taste, is a rejected form of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986; May and Chaplin 2007; Rivera 2010). The objectified capital, the boots, are associated with the embodied cultural capital of race even though the patron was not African American. In other words, by wearing the objectified cultural capital associated with African American males, patrons may still be denied entry because of proximity.

Another incident of explicit racism occurred in a north ATX venue. The 2020 review below described how a bouncer denied him and his friends despite wearing the appropriate clothing:

“I went there with a group of my friends. We were all in slacks, button down shirts and hard bottom shoes. We walked up to the door and the doorman wouldn’t let us in. We asked why because we were dressed appropriately and we got into everywhere else at ‘Diamond Square’ with no problem. The doorman says “I’m gonna be honest there are too many of you guys all together.” That really upset us, basically because there’s a group of black guys all together we can’t get in. That’s about the most racist thing I have ever experienced in Austin....So if you are with a group of black guys don’t go there and if you do, you better split up so it doesn’t look like you guys are all together.”

In this situation, their objectified cultural capital (slacks, button-down shirts, and

hard bottom shoes) was appropriate enough to get into the venue (Bourdieu 1986; Rivera 2010). Despite appealing to White, middle-class standards of dress, the bouncer explicitly told them that their racial identity is not acceptable to gain access. The patrons revealed two conflicting visible cues: A group of African American men and White, middle-class clothing. In this case, the intersectionality of race and gender overrode the patrons wearing the preferred objectified cultural capital. The status of merely being African American, especially combined with working-class and male, are synonymous with unruly or criminal behavior (May 2014). The bartender interviewee reinforced the association between protecting the safety of the venue and those who were hip-hop clothing. Below is his response after being asked what he thought about racial discrimination in nightlife venues:

“Like, um, so I have heard, heard about this happening. Um, and unfortunately, it does happen more with, uh, African American communities, like with getting denied, uh, just with how they dress and stuff. I just think they’re just trying to be safe, but at the same time, I could see how they’re being discriminatory.”

The bartender acknowledged how enforcing these dress code policies can disproportionately affect Black patrons. Nevertheless, he stated that it was a matter of safety with unfortunate consequences for African American communities. Another instance of this occurred in a country nightclub in ATX. A patron, presumably White, questioned why he was not allowed to wear a backwards cap. The bouncer responded that it was for “safety reasons”. A late-night music venue in downtown ATX also reiterated similar language in their dress code:

“Generally, we are Dress to Impress. The only thing we specifically do not allow is backwards baseball caps or sleeveless shirts on men (were you really gonna wear that?)*Most people dress in what may be considered “casual chic.” We do reserve the right to refuse entry based on improper attire or poor attitude. This is that the safety and enjoyment of all our guests.”

These three reviews do not necessarily mean that all NTE bouncers or staff are racially discriminatory. However, these examples are only a few of numerous instances in the data which racial minorities are subjected to scrutiny and treated inferiorly. In addition to race, other factors are considered simultaneously for accessibility, such as class, gender, and sexuality. For instance, throughout all of the data, men were typically the subject of dress code policies with a few exceptions. One of these exceptions included two women of unknown racial identity whom were questioned about discriminated by a bouncer as described below:

“A few weeks ago I went to Pour Choices with a large group of female friends celebrating a 21st birthday. The doormen called us in from the street advertising that ladies could come inside the bar for free (men would be required to pay a cover).After allowing most of our party inside, the doorman stopped my two friends, a lesbian couple, before they entered. They were asked: “Do you holla at boys, or do you holla at girls?” After my friends responded that they are attracted to women. Then they were told they would be treated “like guys” and were asked to pay ten dollars each. The incident was very upsetting for my friends, as they were singled out for being a lesbian couple. None of the other women in our party

were asked this question or asked to pay cover charge.”

Although clothes were not directly addressed, it is questionable how the bouncer would have managed to “know” the sexual orientation of these two women without visible cues. The intersectionality between being a woman and presumably non-gender confirming is enough to gain scrutiny from the bouncer. Women are an advantageous group to nightclub venues since they attract money-spending males. Large groups of attractive women also increase the status of nightlife venues as a safe and sexually-charged place. However, if women are not perceived to be ‘attractive’ to the male gaze, there is significantly less incentive for their presence in nightlife venues. Thus, a heteronormative and hypersexualized is also maintained through exclusion.

Masculinity is also regulated through dress code. A White male was denied for wearing sandals even though his girlfriend was permitted to enter similar wearing shoes. According to the bouncer, the male was denied because it was a “gender thing.” For many nightlife venues, maintaining strict gender norms are essential to foster the ideal environment for unrestricted consumption, which include the consumption of women. A male reviewer in north ATX described the commercial benefit of venues’ attempts to attract single women:

“Got in line at the door that was good size but moving quickly. I’m a guy but was pleased to see they were looking for unattached women, pulling out of line and leading them into the club. That meant they know what drives business and is another positive telling me I probably found what I was looking for...”

The appeal of women in a nightclub is so strong that men can use them to

negotiate their admissions. In other words, a male who may have initially been denied may be able to gain admittance if he has a group of women accompanying him. Several reviewers described the phenomena of women being able to persuade the bouncer to allow them inside. For instance, according to a male reviewer in ATX, he was initially denied for wearing work clothes even though he worked at a nearby bar. However, he was soon accompanied by multiple women so the bouncer allowed him inside. Christian, the African-Latino patron and interviewee, described his views:

Interviewee: “It’s like, alright, say I can’t get into somewhere. More chance for me getting into a club is for me to be with females, know what I’m saying? Who [women] I guess, would accept the way that I’m dressed so they persuade the bouncers to let me in because “He’s with us”, know what I’m saying? Stuff like that along those lines.”

Interviewer: “So, having women increasing your chances, possibly?”

Interviewee: “I mean, it could because they’re [bouncers] looking at you like....I don’t know if they look at you cause you a threat...But I would say like if you walk in with a group of females, you have a better chance than just walking in with your friends type stuff.”

Reviewers reported a similar understanding of the advantages of having women within venues, similar attitudes were reflected representations of patterns within the data that have occurred numerous times throughout both the SMTX and ATX NTE. The reviews and interviews also highlighted the inconsistency of dress code enforcement. For

instance, a venue in ATX 48 dress code violations for multiple articles of dress, including Jordan's, baggy pants, and chains. However, 43 reviewers reported witnessing White people and women wearing prohibited clothing items. A specific example of this occurred when an Asian American woman described how she was allowed inside the venue wearing Jordan's, but her boyfriend was not. Dozens of reviewers, typically people of color or observant Whites, reported that White patrons are allowed inside wearing hip-hop or casual clothing. Christian explains in detail what he experienced on a night-out:

“It was like ‘you can’t get in with Timberlands’ or something like that...And they’re letting other people just walk past with Timberlands on into the club. It’s kind alike, I don’t know. Or it’s like you can’t wear tennis shoes and then you see people-like White people-walk in with tennis shoes, and you’re like ‘Damn, what do you mean I can’t get in with tennis shoes?’”

For Christian, there was an apparent discrepancy in how he and other races were treated despite wearing the same clothing item. He further described how, despite changing his clothing, “they’ve [bouncers] made their decision before they came into contact...”. Christian’s statement emphasizes that the association between Blacks and criminality is relatively fixed. The type of dress, for instance, Jordans, are symbolic markers that supposedly reflect a violent character. Thus, even if the prohibited item is removed, the character of the person has already been determined as a threat. Additional methods to protect the structure of the NTE such as violence and additional security make it difficult for patrons to object to being wrongfully discriminated against.

However, it is also important to note that not all venues were mainstream nightclub venues. Alternative cultural venues such as a goth or a country nightclub may offer a different entertainment experience due to music, clothes, demographic, and entertainment. Some alternative venues suggest a more tolerant attitude versus other that maintain their sub-culture by excluding others, especially with dress code. On one hand, the Goth nightclub in ATX explicitly had one of the most tolerant dress code policies: “What dress code? While we encourage fabulousness always, everything from jeans to chains is acceptable.” The Goth alternative venue had the only dress code policy that encouraged all forms of attire, including hip-hop and casual attire. It also had no racism accusations or reports of dress code exclusion despite having a total of 453 reviews.

The Goth tolerant dress code policy would suggest that they openly encourage the sub-cultural capital of urban African Americans within their alternative venue. In other words, all forms of objectified cultural capital (i.e. chains) are acceptable on any embodied cultural capital (i.e. Black male). This does not necessarily mean that discrimination does not occur or that the venue is racially diverse. Nevertheless, it is a notably different from venues who have a restrictive or a ‘casual’ policy, many of which have had complaints of dress code exclusion. A majority of other alternative venues did not accept all forms of sub-culture, including those of racial minorities. For instance, the country, Latinx, and Gay club in ATX all had at least one report of dress code restriction or racism accusations. A reviewer below described his experience at a popular gay nightclub with a ‘casual’ dress code policy:

“With a two staff vigilant door presence, I prepared to show my ID. What I didn’t prepare for was this -The not so cute, but smug door senior, with the bad

haircut and dull outfit chided me as a greeting. “I’m sorry sir we can’t let you in here unless you pull your pants up.” As though I was already putting up a fight. ”Yeah.” The other door guy confirmed. My pants weren’t even that low. ”I’m sorry we have a dress code here.” Again, as though I was protesting. I pulled up my pants. ”No sagging.” He added “Is this okay?” I sought his approval .”Is my hair okay?” I sweetly said with sarcasm. I think I threw him off guard. They signaled an okay entry. “It’s just like being in Dallas.” I said with a cutting upbeat politeness as I sauntered in. All that, and it was empty inside, the crowd was boring and the music was too. I’ve had fun here before but this experience was pretty lame. I quickly left. Keep Austin (like old 1980) Dallas.”

Interestingly, while I was doing my participation observation in ATX, I came across this particular nightclub and asked the male bouncer if they enforced a dress code policy. The bouncer responded with a no followed by an expression of ‘Isn’t that obvious?’ However, according to this reviewer, the attire associated with hip-hop clothing is not permitted in this alternative nightclub. It can be assumed gay clubs encourages the sub-culture of gay men and lesbian women, which may not be as accepted in mainstream venues dominated by White, heterosexual groups. However, the sub-culture of working-class African Americans seems to have less accessibility. For instance, an ATX local article reported on an African American gay male starting his own community for queer Black men because Rain (the venue listed above) was majority White (Reporting Texas 2016).

Violence/Confrontations and Surveillance Accusations

Eighteen reviewers reported use of physical force, insults, or utilizing the police to handle conflicts with patrons. The intensity of security methods such as CCTV, taking photos of ID's, and requesting ID's when patrons open up a tab maintain control over patrons. Additionally, it is especially difficult to challenge a bouncer when there are many nearby at other venues. The bouncer interviewee, Joshua, explains how prevalent violence is in the NTE as well as their relationship with police.

“It's- there's fights every night. There's every night, there's something going on. Someone's getting too drunk has to get taken out of the bar. It's just a part of it... We do have a, like a group me system on the square. So we took a picture of somebody or like give them a description and say “Hey this guy is drunk.” This guy fought one of us, like, don't let him in. So we're kind of like a family on the square.”

The frequency of violence from bouncers, who are often untrained in combat, to settle disputes is well documented in the current literature (Hobbs et al. 2003; May 2014; Liempt and Aalst 2016). According to the Statesman news station (2017), a downtown ATX bouncer violently pushed an intoxicated patron for attempting to enter the venue. The patron suffered a severe head injury, and the bouncer was charged with aggravated assault. Compared to how many reports of violence were reported within reviews, violence appears to be mostly unchallenged. Joshua's statement also reflects the existing literature on how bouncers have grouped together as part of a surveillance measure.

This method of defense is particularly useful for bouncers when they are challenged about dress code policies. In an online review, a patron described their interactions with a bouncer, which eventually led to police involvement:

“I overheard a bouncer and employee of the establishment advise a African American male that he was not able to enter. He began to question the bouncer he replied, “you have on Jordan’s so you can’t come in” the man pointed out other Patrons with similar brand shoes. He was told if he didn’t leave he would be arrested for Trespassing. He ask for management. After management came out with multiple security he was asked to leave. He left simultaneously after the security was told to remove all the African Americans out of the line. Myself and a couple other African Americans were physically removed by force from the line. We didn’t know each other but when we all asked why we were be treating this way we were advised that the club, “doesn’t separate groups” we advised them this was discrimination and they told us, “they didn’t need our peoples money.”

The marriage between public and private authority leaves little room for frustrated patrons to gain support for discrimination. Police are a significantly more powerful force against patrons, which can be especially problematic for righteously frustrated racial minorities. However, bouncers and police are not the only ones openly engaging in offensive manners towards racial minorities. My analysis suggest that nightclub owners or management have been accused of being explicitly homophobic, racially discriminatory, and sexist in online reviews. For instance, ATX and SMTX bar owner

Brandon Cash gained a racist reputation after multiple reviewers complained of his offensive language online (The Austin Chronicle 2017). Below are several of Cash's responses to a negative review of the customer service prior to media attention:

“Let's be honest with each other...the only thing ill-conceived around here was your birth. And that wasn't a margarita! Since you had a towel on your head my bartender thought you were the new bus boy and handed you some dirty dishes to wash. Side note: next time you ship in a prostitute from out of town you don't have to buy her drinks to get laid.”

The owner's inflammatory response suggests that he has prejudices against ethnic minorities and women. If the owner has openly discriminatory attitudes, his hired staff may not be discouraged from having similar attitudes. Specifically, nightclub staff that act as gatekeepers, security, or cashiers may not be deterred from discrimination. If nightclub staff engages in discriminatory activity, the patron may have limited options to formally share concerns or correct the problem if the venue owner himself is openly prejudice. In fact, when a reviewer makes a complaint, Cash has responded with expletives, a false email, and even threats. Some of these responses have been highlighted in ATX and SMTX news outlets such as these listed below:

“Looking for a really tan/brown small human to walk around unBARlievable tugging on people's shirts while attempting to sell them chicle. Pay commensurate with experience. Email mgmt@unbarlievable.com for consideration. For those of you who are offended by this post please send your complaints to

getfucked@unbarlievable.com.”

“...I hope you don't have any daughter bc [sic] they are definitely gonna get grabbed by the p*ssy you stupid fucking ant!! Anyone know this pile of sh*t?...”

Local ATX and SMTX news reports first covered these comments in 2017, which prompted an apologetic response from the owner (The Austin Chronicle 2017; San Marcos Corridor News 2017). However, after analyzing the online reviews, Brandon Cash has continued to mock the intelligence, appearance, and age of reviewers who leave negative reviews in 2019. In total, I have collected 13 inflammatory responses from Brandon Cash, including the ones listed above. His behavior is unusual for many nightclub managers since well over half of venues do not publicly respond to online review. Yet, his explicit attitudes offer more insight into the overall nightlife culture since it is questionable whether a popular day-time venue could get away with similar language.

Upcharge in Fees Accusations

Exclusion across several intersectionalities are also maintained through inconsistent charges in price. Specifically, fees such as cover charges and expensive alcohol beverages limits accessibility to working-class groups. It also consistently maintains the gender balance between men and women. In addition, bouncers may engage in informal methods of discriminatory charges such as requesting an additional cover charge for African American men who violate the dress code. An African American male who was initially denied for ‘baggy’ pants was charged an extra fee to get inside. He describes his experience below:

“After waiting in a line for 25 minutes I was told my jeans are too baggy and they have a strict dress code. So I’m thinking wow this must be a really nice place! Because I have on jeans, short sleeve dress shirt and \$250 loafers and still can’t get in. But I noticed that the people who were turned away at the door were all black people both male and female. So after stepping out of the line and standing in front of the club one of the guys at the exit door says “Take care of me and I can let you in” So I shook his hand with a \$20 bill and just like magic my jeans didn’t look so baggy anymore. After being inside I noticed people wearing shorts and T-shirt flip flop and tennis shoes but none of them were black people. Once on the roof top I looked over the railing and could see the club entrance and sure enough there was 3 black guys being turned away at the door just like I was 20 minutes and \$20 before.”

The bouncer perceived his pants as ‘baggy’, and thus threatening on an African American male. However, the patron was given the chance to substitute his lack of cultural capital into economic capital for accessibility. It also reiterates the subjections of dress code enforcement against Blacks people. Another Black reviewer also complained in ATX that a multi-level venue only charges a 20% gratuity on the ‘Black floor.’ There is also a stark difference in the fees that men and women pay. Women may be excused for paying cover fees to have a higher population of women in the club. According to a frustrated male reviewer, women pay cheaper prices for bottle service and special event tickets as well.

Although this may be an advantage to women, they are hardly immune to discriminatory charges. A nightclub in ATX called ‘The Den’ was accused by five

different women of being wrongfully charged. Specifically, these women were persuaded to enter the nightclub with a promise of free bottle service with a \$40 gratuity. However, by the end of the night, the management accused the women of being so inebriated that they mistakenly misheard the actual price of \$340. Each of these five women were able to negotiate the price down to \$140. Although it is an unusual method of discrimination against women, it may fit under previous findings about nightlife venues prioritizing profit (Rivera 2010; May 2014; Søgaard 2017).

Lack of Diverse Music Accusations

The lack of diverse music was also a common source of frustration and confusion for racial minorities. Online reviewers expressed frustration over the discrepancy between the club playing hip-hop music yet denying entry to those who wear the hip-hop attire. A patron from ATX described how they were denying entry to those wearing hip-hop even though the club was hosting a hip-hop musician:

“Well, I get to the door and the “bouncer” guy informs me that I can come in but the guy I am with cannot. Why can’t he come in? The bouncer said because of his shoes aka Nike sneakers. I was wearing scuffed up combat boots, ripped jeans but my attire was deemed more acceptable than his. My friend told me I could go up to catch the show without him, but I didn’t want to patronize this bar after the blatant discrimination. I don’t know what type of establishment lets hip hop artist perform at their venue, then turn people away at the door DURING SXSW (of all times) for wearing hip hop gear.”

This review reflects the exploitation of specific Hip-Hop music, yet rejecting the people associated with it. Conversely, several reviewers attempted requested hip-hop music, but were told they were not allowed to play it. This pattern reflects May's (2018) and Talbot's (2007) research regarding music policies and restrictions on DJ's to play Hip-Hop music. Refusing to play hip-hop music may deter large groups of African American groups wanting to participate in night-life venues (Talbot and Bose 2007; Measham and Hadfield 2009). However, venues that play Hip-Hop music may be perceived as more open to Black groups (Talbot and Bose 2007; Measham and Hadfield 2009). According to the patron interviewee Christian, particular clubs have a better reputation for being open to the Black community, including playing more Black music. From his standpoint, nightlife venues who are more lenient on dress code policies and play 'cultured' music are safer spaces for young African American men to socialize.

"Dress codes? In Austin?": Colorblindness and Structural Inequality in ATX and SMTX

After analyzing the reviews, patrons responded to discrimination in two different ways, revealing two different patterns of interpretation. On one hand, 62 ATX reviewers expressed a sense of shock and disbelief at the discrimination within a liberal-minded city. Specifically, their reviews suggested that they interpreted the discrimination as an isolated incident that must be fixed rather than representative of their city as a whole. On the other hand, other reviewers appeared to accept that their experience or observation was representative of the city despite its liberal culture. For instance, Christian responds to what it's like to be an African American male in Austin Texas:

“I mean, Austin’s cool but it’s like, you can go to other places and you’ll feel like ‘Dang, Austin’s definitely lacking’. I guess you can say, uh, Black things, culture. Black culture, stuff like that...I can go out to a place like Atlanta and I can wear stuff. I can dress nice to a certain level and what not. And it be accepted in Atlanta versus it being accepted in Austin, know what I’m saying? Stuff along those lines. Or I can be somewhere that’s in another city that are used to dealing with people of minorities and be accepted or treated with respect. You know what I’m saying? Versus some place in Austin who they don’t know how to deal with certain minorities and stuff like that. Or they say they don’t. Or they’re getting trained on how to deal with minorities and stuff like that when it’s not something that big. It’s not like we animals...”

Christian’s experience as an African American male reflects roughly 112 online reviews that described experiencing racism as being a part of living in Austin. This is notably different than patrons who simply express shock and deny that discrimination is reflective of ATX as a whole. A reviewer from East 6th Street ATX explicitly expressed the opposite of this by stating “#KeepAustinWeirdAsLongAsWhitePeopleLikeIt” in response to their experience of racial discrimination. This statement suggests a hypocrisy between Austin’s tolerant ‘weird’ brand and Austin’s actual tolerance level. On the other hand, the other 62 reviews made a clear distinction between Austin culture (diversity, tolerance, acceptance, ‘weirdness’) and the discrimination being enforced. In other words, Austin and discrimination are described as two contradicting elements. One of several reviewers who was discussing the rejection of a transwoman reflected the ATX culture:

“This bar does not represent Austin and there is no place for this bar here in Austin. You need to fire all of your bouncers and get an entire new staff and owner needs to issue a public apology for what happened. You cannot treat people like this and you should have already and your staff trained on what it means to be in Austin, Texas. And Austin Texas we’d love everybody we do not discriminate against transgender people we do not discriminate against gay people we do not discriminate against people of color we do not discriminate Austin is about love and keeping it weird. Sad. Not discriminating is something that is considered weird because in most parts of the country its simply just accept that but not here in Austin we will not let it stand.”

This statement demonstrates a combination of utilizing a storyline and minimizing race (Bonilla-Silva 2017). The minimization of race is reflected in the reviewer’s belief that discrimination does not occur in ATX. Austin’s brand as exceptionally liberal masks the reality of racial discrimination, which consequently minimizes the severity of racism within the city. In other words, if Austin is perceived as a city that has little to no racism due to its politically tolerant values, then the severity of systematic and cultural racial discrimination cannot be fully addressed or amended.

The review also reflects some aspects of Bonilla-Silva’s (2017) storyline ‘I’m not a racist, but’. Notably, the reviewer is not being personally accused of being a racist like the original storyline suggests. However, by using the pronoun ‘we’, the reviewer suggests that they have a shared identity with ATX. If ATX is perceived as incapable of discrimination, then the reviewer may feel they also “love everybody [and] do not

discriminate” as a member of the city. Thus, the city and its member (reviewer) is able to preserve their anti-racist identities by stating this venue is not a part of Austin. In other words, they are able to maintain the ideal that they are liberally exceptional from the rest of country by removing the ‘misbehaving’ parts.

Interestingly, only ATX reviewers expressed a distinction between observed discrimination and being in a liberal city. However, three reviewers in SMTX made a distinction between discrimination and the ideal college-town. In other words, these reviewers suggested that a college-town is supposed to be more tolerant and easy-going. For instance, a SMTX reviewer that was denied entry for tattoos stated

“All we wanted was to eat because we heard the food was good there and they wouldn’t let us in because of the TATTOOS!! What kind of college town is this!? Never again will we be going to that small town! And there will be a fit made about it!! Tattoos don’t mean that you are a bad person and do horrible things! It’s art! Makes me sick!! Shame on this restaurant and the other two next to it!! Shame on that hick ass town!! Discrimination is AGAINST THE LAW!”

The reviewer’s attitude suggests a sense of shock and frustration at the town’s failure to exemplify tolerance. SMTX may be perceived to be tolerant belief may be because of the relatively large population of young and college-educated adults. However, the SMTX liberalism reviews differs from the ATX reviews because it does not appear to wholly separate SMTX from the discrimination that is experienced. Specifically, the city of SMTX itself does not embody tolerance, but simply a feature of it (the university).

For further comparison, ATX reviewers expressed attitudes such as “Is Austin not supposed to be the most liberal city in Texas?” and “...folks who appreciate racial diversity should stay away from Kung Fu until they decide they actually believe in the Austin motto, ‘keep Austin weird.’ Shameful. Racism’s bad.” ATX nightclub management also encourage this by deflecting accusations against discrimination in the NTE. For instance, a manager made the following statement in response to a reviewer’s complaint about discrimination:

“Despite how “nice” or “classy” someone’s attire is, if it is not within the guidelines of our dress code, they will not be granted access to our establishment. We certainly do not discriminate in anyway, let alone, based on where someone is from. Since we are not from Dallas, but a local, non-discriminatory business owned by Austinites that welcome people from all corners of the world, we may just have to agree to disagree on this particular subject.”

The nightclubs owner not only denies that they are discriminatory, but suggests that because they are ‘Austinites’ they are non-discriminatory unlike Dallas. This statement strategically minimizes the significance of race as a method of NTE exclusion. This response closely resembles a similar attitude that Bonilla-Silva (2017) describes as the “I’m not a racist, but...” storyline. The owner denied engaging in racially discriminating practices despite 14 patrons complaining of rejection for Hip-Hop clothing and 8 for racist accusations. A nightclub in North ATX implemented a colorblind dress code after it was accused on local news of racially discriminating against African American male patrons (Austin Eater 2013). According to the news report, the owner was

forced to post an on-site dress code policy as well as one online. Notably, this was the only non-private membership venue to post a dress code online that listed the prohibited items.

“This dress code is in effect Thursday through Saturday from 8:00pm until close. Kung Fu saloon, employees, and patrons are to present themselves in an appropriate manner which is conducive to a productive, safe and fun environment. The management of Kung-Fu reserves the right to deny entrance to any person who wears the attire specified below: sleeveless or tank top shirts (men), extra-large shirts worn below sleeve-length/wrists-length (men), loosely fitting pants, shorts that fit loosely and are worn below the knee, visibly displayed undergarments or pajamas, sports/athletic apparel, work out apparel, tracksuits or jerseys of any kind (unless attending with a team in a previously-engaged or reserved post-sporting or running event or on game days) (men), any clothing with lewd or obscene phrases, drawings, or symbols, any clothing with phrases, drawings, or symbols that promote discrimination or intolerance of any group based on race, color, religion, national origin , sex, disability, or sexual orientation. Excessive or extreme visible piercings, Hats*, Sunglasses*. *=must be removed once inside the establishment. If you have been permitted entry prior to 8:0pm Thursday through Saturday, you will not be asked to leave after 8pm due to our dress code. Please do not argue with the doormen. Any dispute with the decision of the door men may be raised with the manager.”

Kung Fu's dress code explicitly makes a connection between 'productive, safe, and fun environment' and the listed attire. Ironically, the dress code also prohibits discriminatory clothing while simultaneously rejecting hip-hop style. This reflects a cultural racism against African Americans by suggesting that hip-hop fashion is the opposite of presenting in an appropriate manner. On the other hand, those that do not wear hip-hop or casual wear are considered 'safe and fun'.

VII. CONCLUSION

The nighttime economy has been intensively studied through several generations of urban and ethnographic research (May and Chaplin 2007; Liempt and Aalst 2016; May 2018). The latest literature focuses on the cultural and consumption redevelopment of the urban landscape and its exclusionary consequences (Chatterton and Holland 2002; Meashim and Hadfield 2003; Talbot and Bose 2007). However, NTE research on dress code policies is severely limited. Research that connects dress code policies within the context of a gentrifying urban city and exceptional liberalism culture is minimal. This thesis attempts to fill the literature gap by analyzing the discriminatory methods of NTE dress code policies in San Marcos and Austin, Texas.

In answer to my research questions, I discovered the following: 1) Only racial minorities claimed they experienced racial discrimination due to dress code violations, whereas Whites did not explicitly state race as a factor in their exclusion., 2) Bouncers and management showed racial bias when enforcing dress code policies, 3) Venues showed discriminatory enforcement based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. In an ethnographic content analysis of 523 online reviews on exclusion experiences in ATX and SMTX NTE, I found four pattern: accessibility, violent/confrontational insults, upcharge in fees, and lack of diverse music. I also discovered dress code enforcement differences by race, gender, and class, and liberal exceptionalism within the reviews.

I applied the theories of colorblindness, intersectionality, and cultural capital to analyze the exclusion of racial minorities in the nighttime economy. My findings support previous studies that NTE dress codes focus on rejection of hip-hop attire, which primarily excludes working-class African American males from the venues. The

complicated relationship between race, class, and gender has varying degrees of cultural capital that may permit or deny entry to nightlife venues. Racialized exclusion is also maintained managed through other intense security measures, violent or insulting confrontations, enforcing discriminatory charges, or lack of diverse music. Additionally, Austin's gentrification, exceptional liberalism, and NTE redevelopment enforce exclusion by catering to a White, affluent group. I argue that colorblindness is a strategic tool that masks the racial discrimination within the NTE. Specifically, the minimization of race in dress code policies as well manager reviews dismissed the repercussions of exclusion on racial minorities. Finally, I argue that the tolerant culture of ATX also hinders perceiving the city as perpetuating structural and cultural racial discrimination.

Using online reviews as primary data comes with limitations. First a patron may may post the same review on multiple platforms which gives the impression that there may be more discriminatory incidents. If I recognized an obvious duplicate (i.e. copy and pasted on multiple platforms), I did not count it again. However, I was not able to consistently check for duplicate reviews due to the large amount of reviews. Additionally, local news that reported discriminatory incidents may have motivated reviewers to make negative reviews even if they did not experience discrimination personally. It is also important to note that a lack of reviews does not imply discrimination does not occur. Further research should investigate venues without negative online reviews through participation observation and in-depth interviews with patrons and NTE staff.

Future research on online reviews should focus on a diverse range of nightlife venues such as country, alternative, or majority African American. These may offer a broader understanding of intersectionality, cultural capital, and colorblindness outside of

a White-dominated nighttime economy. Additionally, exploring the attitudes of an older demographic (30-50) within the NTE may offer an alternative perspective on dress code exclusion. Secondly, interviews with bouncers or patrons should include questions that gauge their attitude on the city's overall tolerance level and structure of the NTE. This may be especially helpful in revealing inequality in SMTX since there still remains very little research on the subject, especially within the NTE. Finally, obtaining a larger sample of both racial minorities and White interviewees would also offer a variety of attitudes on NTE dress codes and exclusion.

The NTE is a multi-billion dollar industry that gives a nightlife space which attracts at least 7 billion consumers (American Nightlife Association 2020). The NTE offers a space for people across several demographics, especially young adults, to socialize and seek leisure in ways that are uncharacteristic during daylight hours. However, it also reproduces the exclusion across race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Specifically, this paper has highlighted the microsocial ways African Americans and other marginalized identities are restricted from night-life public spaces. Within ATX and SMTX, at least 523 out of 27,000 reviewers experienced or observed dress code exclusion, discrimination, or racism within these nightlife venues. Considering the sheer amount of NTE consumers across the nation, this may be a small drop in the bucket. However, my goal was to highlight that racism is far from obsolete; it casually entwined into daily life, including the local neighborhood bar.

APPENDIX

Race, Accessibility and Dress codes in College-Town Nightlife Venues

Research Question: How do racial minority college students experience discrimination in nightlife venues?

Statement: Participants in this study must be 18 years of age, enrolled at Texas State University and identify as a racial minority. Participants must also have felt they have experienced discrimination while interacting within nightclubs. All information provided is recording and confidential. The participant will not be compensated for participating and may leave the study at any point in time.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

EMAIL: _____

DEMOGRAPHICS:

GENDER: _____

RACIAL/ETHNICITY:

AGE: _____

SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

CLASSIFICATION: _____

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Describe your involvement/experience in the nightlife scene in San Marcos.
 - Where do you normally go and why?
 - How often do you go and why?

- When you decide to go out to these places, who do you normally go with? Are your friends/partner the same race as you or are your groups usually mixed race?

- Tell me about/describe a time or times you felt discriminated against at a nightclub and/or bar.

- Since this discriminatory action, how have you felt going out to nightlife venues
- Why do you believe that you were discriminated against at said nightclub?
- Why do nightclubs and bars enforce rules like dress codes?
- What is your experience with dress codes personally or through observations?
How often do you think experiences of racial discrimination occur to other racial minorities?
 - What about people who do not identify as a racial minority? Why?
- What do you think is the best way for students with similar experiences to manage discrimination at nightclubs?
- How do you feel about being a racial minority in San Marcos in general?

Race, Accessibility and Dress codes in Nightlife Venues

Research Question: How does nightlife venues perpetuate colorblind racism?

CONTACT INFORMATION:

EMAIL: _____

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

A. Tell me about yourself (Warm-Up Questions)

- **How long have you been working as [position]? How long have you been working at [Club]?**
- **How did you come into this line of work?**

B. Work/Culture

- **Which nights do you typically work? Do you have a favorite night to work? If so/why not? Do you have a least favorite night to work? If so/not why?**
- **How do you feel about your job? Are there aspects you like about it? Dislike about it? What do you think is the most difficult part of your job? How do you explain your line of work to people who are not other door staff?**
- **What are the different roles you work at the club? (For each, probe responsibilities and attitudes towards the role)**
- **How would you describe the culture/vibe of the nightclub? By culture, I mean the relationships between employees, employees and management, the interactions, expectations and norms of the group.**
- **Do you have formal meetings with management?**

C. Selection Process/Dress Code policy/Accessibility

- **When you work the door, do you ever have to turn people away? [If yes] Under what circumstances does this happen?**
- **What percentage of customers would you guess you turn away on a given night?**
- **When the club is close to capacity (or there is space for only a few people), how does selection work? Are the criteria similar or different than when the club is less busy?**
- **Tell me about the last three customers you admitted**
- **Tell me about the last three customers whom you rejected**
- **Please describe an ideal customer.**
- **Have you ever had to turn away or remove a “regular?” from the club? (i.e. someone you know from the club)? For what reasons?**

What’s the student ID policy at your place of work? Is it written down or more informally enforced?

- Tell me about a time when you or a co-worker had to enforce the student ID policy
- What do you look for to tell if someone is a student?
- **Is there a dress code?** How should men and women dress/appear/present themselves at club? **Are there exceptions?**
- **How do you feel when you have to turn people away? What kind of reactions do you get when turning people ?**
- How consistently do you think the dress code is enforced in nightclubs?

A recent news article described how a Portland nightclub was accused of racially discriminating against a client because of how they dress. For example, in this club a Black male was not allowed inside the club because he was wearing “too much red” and it represented “gang colors”.

- Can you tell me about a time you’ve heard or seen this happen type of event at a nightclub?
- How can a bouncer tell if someone is in a gang or not? What are some signs?
- Do you think it might be harder for someone who is black to get into a club? Why/why not?

Relationship with Outside Authorities

- What kind of relationship do you have with outside authority such as police?
- Tell me a time that police have had to get involved with the club? What happened?
- In what situations is police assistance requested/needed?

Clients/Club Climate:

- How would you describe the club’s culture/vibe? (i.e.
- How would you describe the people inside the club?
- What kind of music is played on a typical weekend night at the club and why?

Is there anything else that you think is important to add that relates to your job experience that we have not covered yet?

Can you refer me to anyone else who may be interested in interviewing with me?

Follow Up Questions:

Can you refer me to any other nightclub employees people who may be interested in interviewing?

DEMOGRAPHICS:

GENDER: _____

RACE/ETHNICITY:

AGE: _____

SEXUAL IDENTIFICATION:

OCCUPATION _____

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