

Punching Through the Patriarchy: Investigating Gender Performativity Across the LSE Boxing Space

By Charlotte Parrish, BA Geography (2024 graduate): Winner of the Award for Innovative Undergraduate Research in Geography and Environment

In questioning representation, exclusion, and separation, this research paper investigates how gender performativity, as coined by Judith Butler (2002), changes across a university boxing space. By using the London School of Economics (LSE) Boxing Club as a case study, the spaces of the body, the ring, and the gym are examined- presenting a spatial and thus geographical analysis of boxing and gender through a feminist queer lens. Through a non-introspective diary study, participant observation and conversational semi-structured interviews, I find that gender performativity certainly does change across the LSE Boxing space.

Gendered performances, shaped by gendered representation in the media/ idols, female committee members and friendships, impact how women feel and perform through their bodies in the ring and the gym. Gendered exclusion causes women to conform to gendered norms by restricting their bodies to particular spaces in the gym or prevent themselves from using certain spaces altogether, such as the ring. Gendered separation is embodied by both men and women across the gym and the ring; women feel uncomfortable sparring with men because of their actual or assumed violence and men feel uncomfortable when they are being judged against this when they are purposely trying not to assert disproportionate violence in the ring and gym. In progressing this research, one should go beyond the binary of gender and apply gender performativity to more nuanced spaces such as the gym's 'changing room' or the queer gym.

Comment from Gabi Froden, the Illustrator:



I wanted to express the frustrations of women training in spaces where male boxers build up their confidence often at the expense of female boxers. The title of the dissertation itself helped me land on this particular imagery pretty quickly.