

ABSTRACT

Beyond The Classroom: Students' Negotiation of Spaces and Cultural Expressions In Jamaican High Schools

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The study explores how high school students negotiated non-academic school spaces within the broader context of youth cultural expressions. The research is a qualitative ethnographic study in which the researcher used a cultural lens to study selected non-academic spaces in two urban high schools in Western Jamaica. The techniques employed were photographs of physical spaces, structured and semi-structured interviews with adults and students, and time sampling observations. Data collection and analysis were guided mainly by the work of Foucault, 1977; Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1993 whose theoretical framework focuses on social processes of space production to situate students' daily lived experiences at school as they negotiate various non-academic spaces available to them. The findings were discussed in relation to cultural and social interpretations of space and revealed the following: rigid school management systems demonstrating strong hegemonic processes, inherent desire of students to experience selected fun, comfort and cultural products, low level of student participation in school spatial decision making, strong aversions to infringement of citizenship rights, perceptions of dominant teacher autonomy and feelings of powerlessness. Generally it was found that adult interference was a key determinant in how students negotiated non-academic spaces of their schools.

Keywords: Sonia Marcia Graham; social production of space; school spaces; academic spaces; secondary level education; non-academic spaces; school yard; spatial rights; negotiation; youth culture; territorialisation.