

Contested space assignment



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Contested Space Although many strive to avoid it, people are running into contested space moments after they open their eyes each morning. We form these walls of contested space automatically, sometimes subconsciously which comes into play as we go about life. Contested space is a generally used term; that has a fairly vague definition.

However, Mary Louise Pratt In her work: *Arts Of The Contact Zone* expresses it use well, stating: " I use this term to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in context of highly asymmetrical relations of power" I have personally identified contested space to be space where people or ideals collide resulting in place for each player within the situation. By viewing Monticello High School at three levels, landscape, space, and place, you can begin to break it down and see the many forms of contested space.

Contested space can vary from a very physical sense, to a completely mental state, affecting how we go about life in very different ways.

Monticello High School is the ideal environment for both forms of contested space. Even based simply on its basic location in relation to other objects, there is physically contested space at a landscape point of view. The most obvious would be where the High School and Middle school are conjoined together. Contested space is formed where the high school ends, and the middle school begins.

This contested space was formed more by the architects as the school was being built, rather than any students or faculty currently residing within the school itself. Another landscape of contested space, to me personally would

be the cafeteria. This is because while the cafeteria was once a place for me, it is now a simple landscape. It was a place at one point because I knew who was in the cafeteria during a certain period, and I had purpose to be within its walls. However now, because of my very unique schedule, I never go near it, or even know who or what is currently happening within it, whether it is a study hall or lunch period.

Its mentally become a point on my invented school map which I only have the ability to look at from an outside point of view. As you move down from landscape, into a spatial view of the school, you can begin to section off locations as contested space hot spots. The hallways for example, are packed in certain areas, yet flow fluidly in others locations. These contested spaces are “fought over” in quite a physical manner. These bottlenecks within the halls cause crowding, and lack of movement.

Another example of a space would be the Courtyard located in the center of the school. This is easily the least crowded area within the school walls, and contrary of the hallways, is contested in a much more mental manner. After interviewing multiple seniors who presumably would know most about the conducts of the school, I discovered, most believed it to be off limits to students. These students see the courtyard every day for over three school years, and simply assume it is off limits space because of minimal student traffic through it.

Much like the mentality of Jilian from N. Reynolds’ interview: “If everything they need is there in the student neighborhoods, why should (white, middle-class) college students venture into unknown territory?” (N. Reynolds, Maps

of the everyday, p. 481) However after speaking to the Vice Principal Ms. Morse this is not the case, she states: “ anyone is allowed passing through the courtyard while the weather is fair, and as long as they travel through in a school hallway acceptable manner. ” (Paraphrased V. P.

Virginia Morse) This is a much different form of contested space from the bottleneck scenarios, because the student interviewed mentally formed an imaginary contested space between themselves and the schools administration. Place within the school is extremely abundant, because there is so much contested space, relationships, and connections forming constantly. The greatest example of a student’s place would be their locker. It holds their personal belongings, and they keep it for most of their high school career. “ you add your own personal possessions... Thus space is turned into place.

Your place. ” (Tim Cresswell, Defining place, p. 2) Yet a locker lacks much contested space. This is because its walls are so personal, and well protected; no one else has to know about it, other than its location, creating a simple space, or even landscape for outside viewers. The only point where this space may be contested would be if someone were attempting to break into the locker, which would be a strictly physical contest of space. If a place as personal as a locker was ever contested, it would most likely affect the owner’s daily life and outlook drastically.

Another contested space that relates to place would be a location where students meet prior to first period. Although this is a physical location, the contested space is also mental. No group truly claims a location within the

school, however naturally a section becomes the normal, comfortable location where one can expect to meet their companions, creating a strong knit place. The place may become contested space when an unusual or undesirable person places himself or herself within the location.

This may result in a new member to the place, or a confrontation, depending on the situation presented. These groups can be related to small neighborhoods, which strengthen the sense of place as Elaine states in her interview with N. Reynolds: “ It’s like your neighborhood Is your whole life, isn’t it?... People identify with their neighborhood, and if you’ve got everything there, then you didn’t need to go out of it, and you’re safe in this area where you live, cause that’s where the home is. ” (N. Reynolds, Maps of the everyday p. 79) The differences between mental and physical contested space varies greatly. Physical contested space affects day-to-day life of a person very differently than a mentally contested space. By examining certain points of Monticello High School in specific layers it is easier to better understand the concept of contested spaces, and the effects on peoples lives. People avoid, or adapt to the spaces so well, subconsciously, the school is still able to flow at a natural rate. There are always exceptions, but many of these contested spaces continue to occur everyday without incident.