'Place-making': Investigating the place-based identity negotiations of high school girls in the informal spaces of their school.

by

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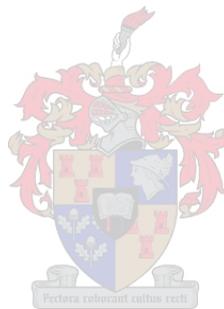
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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This research study explores the navigation and negotiation of five Grade 10 high school girls' identities within their school spaces. The study privileges a link between space and identity which provides a conceptual platform in terms of which I was able to construct an investigation into how these high school girls go about their place-making inside their school. The investigation focuses on understanding how practices of place-making influences the identities of the students involved as well as the formation and transformation of the place, their high school.

The theoretical framework is founded on a combination of Lefebvre's theory (1971/1991) regarding the production of space which includes the interaction of physical, social and mental dimensions of space on the one hand, and Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff (1983) theorisation of the formation of place-identities. Together with these theories, other researchers and theorists, such as: Nespor (1994, 1997), Massey (1991, 1994, 1995), Tupper et al. (2008), O'Donoghue (2007) and Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi (2011) have contributed to my theorisation of place-making and place-identities.

This study is situated within the interpretivist paradigm and utilised a critical ethnographic research approach that produced qualitative data findings. Data were collected through the use of five qualitative data collection methods: (1) participant observations; (2) unstructured and semi-structured interviews; (3) focus group discussions; (4) photo-elicitation interviews utilising student produced photographs; and (5) photo-diaries.

My main analytical findings reveal that these girls went about making place in ways that stretched across the three spatial dimensions (physical, social and mental) and they went about this in individual, communal and strategic ways guided by their affective positions in response to the affectivity of the place. I argue that through the school's encouragement of the students to express themselves in its spaces, the students went on to inhabit and create the school as a place in unanticipated ways. In the school's 'out-of-sight' spaces the girls were emoting, acting, negotiating and strategising in order to establish their emerging identities. Importantly, the culture of the school opened up the space for these girls to act and their acting at school was instrumental in reorganising and transforming the place. The school attempted to be an inclusive space that accommodates diversity, but the girls' affectivities, their bodies and their embodied dispositions, co-constituted the school as a specific type of place. I argue that the girls interpreted the culture of the school and acted in response to its discourses and their desire to belong and consequently constructed ways of

'living' at the school. It became clear that the character of the school as a place was constantly lived, experienced and reordered by those who moved through it.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsingstudie ondersoek die bepaling en bedinging van die identiteite van vyf graad 10-dogters binne die ruimtes van hulle skool. Die studie gebruik die verband tussen ruimte en identiteit as konseptuele platform om ondersoek in te stel na hoe hierdie hoërskooldogters die proses van plekskepping binne hulle skool hanteer. Die doel met die navorsing is om te begryp hoe plekskeppingspraktyke die betrokke studente se identiteite sowel as die vorming en omvorming van die plek – hulle hoërskool – beïnvloed.

Die teoretiese raamwerk berus enersyds op Lefebvre se teorie (1971/1991) oor ruimteskepping, wat die wisselwerking tussen die fisiese, sosiale en geestesdimensies van ruimte insluit, en andersyds op Proshansky en kollegas (1983) se teoretisering van die vorming van plek-identiteit. Hiermee saam het ander navorsers en teoretici soos Nespor (1994, 1997), Massey (1991, 1994, 1995), Tupper en kollegas (2008), O'Donoghue (2007) sowel as Marcouyeux en Fleury-Bahi (2011) ook tot die teoretisering van plekskepping en plek-identiteite bygedra.

Die studie is binne die vertolkende paradigma uitgevoer, en het 'n kritiese etnografiese navorsingsbenadering gevolg om kwalitatiewe databevindinge op te lewer. Data is ingesamel deur middel van vyf kwalitatiewe datainsamelingsmetodes, naamlik (1) deelnemerwaarneming, (2) ongestruktureerde en semigestruktureerde onderhoude, (3) fokusgroepbesprekings, (4) fotoreaksie-("photo-elicitation"-)onderhoude met foto's wat deur studente self geneem is, en (5) fotodagboeke.

Die vernaamste analitiese bevindinge dui daarop dat hierdie dogters se plekskeppingsprosesse oor ál drie ruimtelike dimensies (die fisiese, sosiale en geestesdimensie) strek, en dat hulle dié prosesse op individuele, gemeenskaplike en strategiese maniere aanpak na gelang van hulle affektiewe reaksie op die affektiwiteit van die plek. Omdat die skool die studente aanmoedig om hulle in die skoolruimtes uit te leef, het die studente die skool op onvoorsiene maniere as plek begin inneem en inrig. In die skoolruimtes buite sig het die dogters emosioneel opgetree, gehandel, onderhandel en strategieë uitgewerk om hulle ontluikende identiteite te vestig. Dit is belangrik om daarop te let dat die skoolkultuur die ruimte vir die dogters se handelinge ontsluit het, en dat hulle handelinge bygedra het tot die herskikking en transformasie van die plek. Die skool het 'n daadwerklike poging aangewend om 'n inklusiewe ruimte te wees wat vir diversiteit voorsiening maak. Terselfdertyd het die dogters se affektiwiteite, liggame en beliggaamde gesindhede die skool egter ook as 'n bepaalde

soort plek ingerig. Die karakter van die skool as 'n plek word klaarblyklik voortdurend geleef, beleef en herskik deur diegene wat daardeur beweeg.

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Completing this Masters thesis has entailed journeying through emotional avenues which I previously did not know existed. I discovered many new strengths as well as weaknesses, but have courageously journeyed to the end. I could not have faced this tremendous challenge without the support, love and guidance of those whom surrounded me during this time.

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To my family and loved ones, you have cheered me on and have celebrated the small rewards as they occurred along the way. Thank you for being interested in what I had to say about my reading, planning, research and writing processes, but also for distracting me, feeding me, taking me for hikes and bicycle rides and offering me balance throughout the process. I could not have done this on my own.

And most importantly - thank you God for sustaining me, for all the above and many more blessings along the way. May you be my guide in the journey which lies ahead!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background to the Research Question

This study is guided by an interest in the navigation and negotiation of youth identities within school spaces. The link between space and identity provides the conceptual platform for the investigation of place-making in a specific high school. Although young people move and operate within a vast array of spaces and contexts, which could influence their becoming (Fataar, 2007), they spend much of their day in their schools. I believe that schools are significant sites that can generate insights into the process of place-making as students 'live' in the school spaces and consequently form place-identifications while negotiating their own emerging identities. However, importantly, as I will show, the specifics of the participants as well as the school and its unique context are of great importance in order to understand this process of place-making.

Context is critical, specifically within the field of social and educational research and in studies of an ethnographic nature. Context can be viewed as a complex coming together of various processes and features, creating intersections of physical geography, settlement history, gender, race, language, social class, age, economy and politics (Nespor, 1997; Fataar, 2007; Soudien 2007). The context-related geographical and historical aspects of a research site are of great importance if one aims to gain an understanding at a site such as a school situated within specific borders and occupied by a particular group of people.

The post-apartheid South African context has seen issues of race, class, gender and language play out in unexpected ways. This is in part the consequence of overwhelming social realignments that have been taking place in this country. According to Fataar (2010), the South African political transition and its consequent social reorganisation have caused young people to constantly negotiate and adapt to their ever-changing realities. He argues that transformation associated with this transition period forced South African youths to find new ways of positioning and evaluating themselves as they are now situated in a "newer, more complex terrain" (Fataar, 2010:44).

In the light of these transformations it is argued that schools and other educational institutions are significant sites where a variety of cultures involving a range of languages, racial interactions and class manifestations connect and interact (Vandeyar, 2008). The school is a space where educational interaction takes place, which creates a particular context for the negotiation of identities. High schools are significant and interesting sites for conducting identity research as

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students from a variety of neighbourhoods and backgrounds come together in one space and consequently have to re-organise and position themselves.

Schools, although mainly understood as formal learning institutions, are significantly social sites. Students spend large portions of their school day interacting with fellow classmates and peers as well as with teachers, sport coaches and other staff members. High school students' feelings relating to school connectedness are associated with the social environment of the school and the number of peers they have access to for making friends (Booth & Gerhard, 2012; Parker, 2014). These friendship networks help to transmit institutional cues and assist students in creating a sense of belonging (Scanlon et al., 2007).

The critical nature of this type of membership – a belonging to and forming part of a group or network – is emphasised when investigating the self in society (Stets and Burke, 2003). Alternatively, students' unsuccessful alignment to a group or network leads to alienation, which could lead to harassment or bullying (Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2007); this could in turn lead to forming negative connections to the places where these incidents occur (O'Donoghue, 2007). The creation of, as well as belonging to, groups and networks seems to be an essential pursuit for young people in the process of becoming their adult selves, and this process formed an integral part in shaping the objectives of this research project.

Young people typically express their belonging to or membership of a group by the activities that they engage in, and the choices they make regarding, for example, fashion and the music they listen to (Nespor, 1997). Popular youth culture influences many choices young people make regarding various aspects of their lives. Furthermore, these expressions of popular culture are influenced by gender. This is evident as boys and girls are somewhat distinct in their tastes, their activities, behaviours and articulations (Nespor, 1997; Tupper et al., 2008; Soudien, 2007). Popular youth culture influences and defines young people's lives in South Africa, impacting on the types of identities that are negotiated by students (Vandeyar, 2008).

In addition to the social networks and associations that students form with each other, they develop symbolic ownership of physical spaces and associate with and give meaning to such spaces through their embodied experiences, which in turn contributes towards a deepening understanding of their own unfolding identities (King & Church, 2013). As such, young people often need to create 'spaces of their own' (Nespor, 1997), where they have control without adult interference. When inside of schools, which are mostly understood as highly regulated spaces that are controlled by adults' authority and rules, students similarly experience this need to exert some sense of control

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over certain elements of their school-going lives (Strum, 2008). People need to experience a sense of place, which they can claim with their feelings and experience deeply (Sobel, 2002), and therefore will find ways to carve out these 'private places' which they feel they have control over, even if they are situated within regulated settings such as schools.

In employing an ethnographic approach to my research I deliberately positioned myself in these young people's school-world in order to understand and gain novel insights into how high school girls, specifically, experience their unique school context. The aim of the study is to acquire a fine-grained reading and understanding of the school-based lives of the selected female students who were the research participants of this study. The focus is on understanding how they negotiate their place-based identities in the informal spaces of their independent school environment within this newer South African schooling context.

1.2   Research Questions

This study is guided by the following main question and three related sub-questions.

1.2.1   Main Research Question

The main research question asks, "To what extent do high school girls 'make place' while negotiating their place-based identities in the informal spaces of their independent high school?"

1.2.2   Sub-questions

In addition to the main research question, this study offers a response the following three sub-questions:

  I.   How do the physical and social resources of a place influence these high school girls' place dependence?
 II.   What place-making practices do these high school girls engage in in the informal school spaces?
III.   What is the nature and the extent of the identifications that these high school girls make in relation to their school?

1.3   Problem Statement

High school girls are constantly engaged in complex interactions in the various informal spaces of their school. By acting in these spaces they are actively involved in making place, a process which shapes and re-organises the spaces they move through. The nature and extent of the identifications

that high school girls make emotionally, symbolically, as well as with the physical building and material spaces of their school influence the social networks that they come to create. These identifications consequently guide the way that these students see themselves in relation to the physical and social spaces of their school, which contributes to the types of place-based identities they negotiate and establish for themselves. The interplay between the school as a specific place and the place-based identities of the students inhabiting it suggests that places shape the people who inhabit them and vice versa.

1.4   Research Aims

This research project intends to achieve the following research aims:

   i)   Gaining insight into the place-making processes of these high school girls;
   ii)   Examining the relationships that are assembled at the intersection of the school's expressive culture[1] and a group of high school girls;
   iii)   Exploring how high school girls construct and negotiate their peer affiliations and social networks by interacting with and acting in the informal school space;
   iv)   Examining the nature and the extent of the place-based identifications that high school girls make within the informal spaces of their school;
   v)   Examining the extent to which affect and emotion influence the place-making process.

1.5   Research Objectives

This research study has the following objectives:

   i.   Examining how high school girls' schooling history and domestic lifeworlds situate them in their high school;
   ii.   Examining how high school girls inhabit the informal spaces of their school;
   iii.   Exploring and understanding the expressive culture of the school;
   iv.   Exploring and understanding the symbolic and physical meanings that students attach to the built environment (visual landscape) of the school;
   v.   Exploring how high school girls form peer affiliations and construct social networks;
   vi.   Examining how high school girls congregate in the informal spaces of their school;

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[1] I refer to 'expressive culture' in the way that Bernstein et al. (1966:429) describe it, namely as consisting of activities, procedures and judgments involved in the school's production and transmission of values and norms, which in turn are the sources of the school's shared identity and cohesiveness. (See Chapter Three for an elaboration of the concept of 'expressive culture').

vii.   Examining how high school girls interact in groups by forming and negotiating social group identities;

viii. Understanding the role of 'the body in space' and the influence of its specific intersections (such as gender, age, social class and race) on the formation of place-based identifications;

 ix.   Exploring the nature and extent of the affective attachments that high school girls make with their school.

1.6   Significance of the Research

An understanding of how high school girls inhabit and identify with their school will generate invaluable insights into how they come to construct and negotiate identities related to their school-going experiences and the school as a specific socialising institution. This will enable various stakeholders to "respond more adequately to young people's uneven and complex immersions into their school going" (Fataar 2010:14).

Research studies focused on the spatial characteristics of schools, which include the adequacy or inadequacy of the physical and social resources, enhance our understanding of the role these factors play in contributing to the types of behaviour that could occur in these spaces and how these spatial characteristics influence the way that individuals identify with school. This is especially significant with reference to the South African context, where many schools continue to experience the disadvantages of the apartheid legacy with regards to the uneven distribution of resources and quality of physical school buildings.

In the words of Holloway et al. (2010): "This will allow us to highlight the importance of young people's experiences of education in the here and now, as well as having concern for education's future impacts, encouraging us to engage with young people as knowledgeable actors whose current and future lifeworlds are worthy of investigation" (p. 594).

1.7   Motivation for this study

My interest in this research field derives from a desire to explore and understand human behaviour in social contexts. I am fascinated by subjective differences and how they manifest and influence behaviour within socialising institutions such as schools. I find youth identities specifically interesting as young adolescents are engaged in complex and interesting processes of becoming their adult selves. I believe that an understanding of these processes is valuable for teachers' successful engagement, socially and academically, especially with young adolescent students.

My experience of teaching in various public schools in and around Cape Town has led me to view schooling today as contesting and somehow contradicting my own schooling experiences. The act of teaching in a culturally diverse and complex context has forced me to confront my own assumptions about people, their circumstances and their behaviour. It was this inconvenient truth, stemming from my own naivety, that stimulated my desire to better understand these tensions, which I believe are inherent to the South African context and which play out in specific ways in schools.

My interest in this research topic was further informed by readings I did during the first year of my postgraduate studies on topics related to youth identity and school space, and how they interlink with and influence each other. This has guided my interest in exploring how young peple go about negotiating their identities within the school context. I believe that schools are significant spaces where insights regarding youth identity formation and negotiation can be generated as learners move through school buildings and occupy the school's various spaces, make identifications and negotiate emerging identities. To some extent my chosen research focus has created an opportunity for me to 'revisit' school, to re-discover, experience and evaluate what it takes to negotiate a very different context from what I remember from my own schooling.

1.8   Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on generating an understanding of the place-making practices of five Grade 10 high school girls while negotiating their place-based identities in the informal spaces of their independent high school. This study employed an ethnographic research approach for a period of six months and utilised five research methods in order to collect the necessary data.

Duration of fieldwork

During the time I committed to this research study, I was permanently employed by the Western Cape Education Department and based at a school as a special needs teacher. My employment limited the possibilities for this research study. I could secure study leave from my current employer for a period of six months and consequently had to structure my fieldwork around this limitation. These factors created some very specific financial and time-related limitations in the study.

The possibility of devoting more time to fieldwork in the chosen school could have offered me more opportunities to observe the specific activities and behaviours that I set out to observe. Additional time in the field would have provided more time for conversations with the participants,

potentially fostering a relationship of greater trust between the researcher and the various participants, which would have had several benefits regarding the reliability and validity of the data.

The research site

The research site, Mount Valley high school (not it's real name), is an independent or private high school situated in a peri-urban suburb of Cape Town. The chosen peri-urban suburb is a quickly expanding geographic location which has undergone various settlement rearrangements since the demise of apartheid. These rearrangements are significant for this specific study, as they influenced various aspects related to schooling in South Africa. The various communities inhabiting this peri-urban suburb represent a variety of racial and social class groupings. Settlement arrangements extend from the presence of informal settlements through the spectrum to include affluent upper-middle-class domestic locations.

While conceptualising this study I hoped to eventually attract participants who were representative of the various racial as well as social class groups in this area. I believe that such a multi-cultural, diverse mix of students would also be representative of the varied social classes and racial groups that make up the South African landscape. Before I approached schools for this study, I conducted some initial background research into the various high schools in this specific geographic location. The criteria included that these schools should accommodate students from mixed racial as well as middle- to lower-class social groupings. I consequently approached five of the public high schools that met these selection requirements. After I had followed the correct research application procedures, none of these public high schools granted me access to their schools, each offering various reasons for their rejection of this ethnographic research study.

I was eventually granted permission to conduct my ethnographic research at an independent high school in the same geographical location which matched the requirements of my study. There are a plethora of independent schools in the South African schooling context offering alternatives to public, mainstream education delivery. I believe that the chosen school represents these 'new', mixed school spaces (Fataar, 2007) that are the result of a neoliberal urban spatial restructuring, open access, post-apartheid settlement history and the school's geography.

Informal school spaces

The focus of the study was specifically on the negotiations of each of the participants' place-based identities in the informal spaces of their school. It is important to note that the study does not focus on students inside their formal classrooms, but instead focuses on their interactions in their informal

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(out-of-classroom) spaces. I believe that a study of the informal spaces beyond the classroom offers the possibility of generating insights into an aspect of the lives and worlds of students that educators do not usually pay specific attention to (Tupper et al., 2008). More importantly, it is within these more informal spaces, which include spaces such as hallways, courtyards and playgrounds, that students interact more freely, where they display and perform their identities to other students in this public arena (O'Donoghue, 2007).

The participants

I have limited my study to observing and interviewing a group of five Grade 10 girls. Selection criteria included that these girls should preferably have formed part of a group of friends who spend their time together outside the formal classroom in the informal spaces of the school. However, securing such a group of girls was subject to their volunteering as research participants. A group of five girls who spend considerable amounts of their free time at school together volunteered to take part in the research. Detailed biographical information regarding the five participants is provided later in the Research Methodology section.

This study specifically focuses on girls and not boys. The aim of this study is not to compare findings related to gender. This decision is guided by the acknowledgement that, apart from the biological differences, boys and girls view and react to physical settings differently as well as identify and resolve problems related to relationships, their personal space and privacy differently (Proshansky et al., 1983). Additionally, recent studies have found that girls form 'natural peer groups' which "share patterns of beliefs, values, symbols and activities" (Adriaens, 2014:104) more readily than boys do.

Place-based identities

This study operates on the assumption that identity is socially constructed and that all individuals negotiate and shift between multiple identities (Hollingwood & Archer, 2010). This encompasses a wide range of identity types; however, the focus here is specifically on the place-based identities of high school girls. Thus, the study is limited to examining their negotiation of these specific identities, which relate to a particular place, namely their high school. I have selected this as the focal point in order to generate an understanding of the relationship between the individual and the physical environment.

1.9   Research design and methodology

Central to a successful research study is the careful construction of a research design that allows the research to proceed smoothly. Merriam (1998:6) describes the research design as "similar to an architectural blueprint, it is a plan for assembling, organising, and integrating information". In this section I will explain the various methodological aspects that contributed to the realisation of my research project. Methodology guides the specific choice of data-collecting methods and is "concerned with why, what, from where, when and how data is collected and analyzed" (Scotland, 2012:9). For this study I employ a qualitative methodological approach, which shares its philosophical foundations with the interpretive paradigm. The chosen methodology and methods reflect the differing assumptions of knowledge and reality, which underpin the particular research paradigm's approaches to doing research.

The interpretive paradigm supports the view that there are many truths and multiple realities. This paradigm is associated with methodological approaches that provide an opportunity for the voice, experiences and practices of research participants to be heard. Important for my specific study is the interpretive methodology's point of departure that "knowledge and meaningful reality are constructed in and out of interaction between humans and their world and are developed and transmitted in a social context" (Scotland, 2012:11). Through this lens, I aim to understand a specific social phenomenon from the individual students' perspective by investigating personal experience, interaction among individuals as well as considering their historical, cultural and educational contexts (Scotland, 2012).

1.9.1   Critical ethnography

Ethnography is a research strategy often used in the field of social science research and is "concerned with the multi-layered complexity of the social" (Fataar, 2010:8). It is often employed for gathering empirical data on human societies and cultures, and aims to describe the nature of those who are studied. My study employs an ethnographic research approach known as critical ethnography. Critical ethnography is seen as a unique genre in the field of education research and developed with the emergence of interpretivist movements in anthropology and sociology along with neo-Marxist and feminist theories (Anderson, 1989). Critical ethnographers are concerned with more than just reconstructing cultures and ways of living.

In my study place, place-making practices and place-based identities were investigated by adopting a critical ethnographic research approach. Pink (2008) argues that place is central to people's ways of being in the world and that people are inevitably and unavoidably 'emplaced'. For the critical

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ethnographer observing people in place can be used to describe the negotiations of place-based identities as well as the place-making practices of these people in order for them to give meaning to place. Place should be understood as a process – something that is constantly being made and remade – and one task of the critical ethnographer is to understand these place-making processes.

When doing critical ethnographic research, up-close and personal observations and experiences are key to the successful gathering of rich qualitative data. As an ethnographic researcher I adopted an involved, connected observer stance and immersed myself in the concrete, everyday world of these high school girls in order to better understand them as student participants and their lives at school (Hobson, 2005:123). This approach served as a tool by which I could be perceived by them as an 'insider' rather than an outsider coming in. In order to become an accepted and trusted individual by the participants, I had to achieve "shared, social and situated ways of being with participants" (Hobson, 2005:127). I achieved this by adopting a willingness to take part in the daily activities that the students engaged in. In this way I could share the situations in which these student participants were operating and I could experience their social context at school for myself.

1.9.2   Data collection

As this is a qualitative research study, I employ the interpretive method to "yield insight and understandings of behavior, explain actions from the participant's perspective, and do not dominate the participants" (Scotland, 2012: 12). My aim is to produce a research thesis which "provides rich evidence and offers credible and justifiable accounts (internal validity/credibility)" (Scotland, 2012:12).

In the six-month period that I conducted my fieldwork I spent the first month orientating myself and doing initial in-depth participant observations. This enabled me to acquaint myself with the functioning of the school and orientate myself accordingly; identify the informal spaces that I focused my observations on; informally observe behaviour in these informal spaces and (together with the principal/teacher) identify a group of Grade 10 girls who were to be the focus of my observations and interviews for the following two months. Time was also spent gathering the necessary consent forms and to prepare the students for the intended research and their role as participants.

Critical ethnography usually involves a substantial amount of interviewing and entails an extended period of participant observation in order to come to deeper understanding of those being observed. In the approximately 5 months that I had left at the school (as a participant observer) I collected rich qualitative data by means of the following methods: participant observations; focus group

discussions; individual semi-structured interviews; photo-elicitation interviews and writing produced by the student participants.

1.9.3   Research site

I considered the selection of my specific research site carefully. The chosen school is representative of the changed phenomenon of schooling in South Africa. I argue here that schools have changed structurally as well as conceptually since the apartheid era. I believe this school represents these 'new', mixed school spaces that are the result of open access, post-apartheid settlement history and the school's geography. This specific school attracts students from working-class as well as middle-class families, and was previously defined in terms of apartheid's racial borders. The school is in a community which had previously been dominated by whites, but that has transformed into a space where people of all races are living alongside each other and are creating new and meaningful places together. The point is that when different people come together in an open democratic space, they engage in different place-making practices than before. Consequently, these places change as a result of the new activities that take place within their confines. The significance of specifically this type of research site is that, in my opinion, it is a compelling cross-cutting section of upper-working-class and middle-class aspiring citizens engaged in the social processes playing out in post-apartheid South Africa.

1.9.4   Research unit / participants

Participation in this research was voluntary and focused on high school girls attending Grade 10. The school principal as well as the head of department helped to identify the specific Grade 10 class group that was approached to collect participants. Five Grade 10 girls volunteered to participate in the study. They were a racially and culturally diverse group of girls.

1.9.5   Data-collection methods

This ethnographic research approach utilised five data-collection methods that allowed me to explore the research questions which guided my study. The study focused on gathering data related to the physical and social resources that the school offers; the place-making practices that girls engage in; and the identifications that they make with their school.

i.   *Participant observation*

The objective of participant observation is to gain a foothold on social reality and is achieved with the participant observer being in close contact with the people being studied (Bryman, 2001). The act of collecting data as a participant observer entailed that I participate in many of the same kinds

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of activities as the members of the social setting being studied, i.e. the students in the specific school, in order to gain access to a deeper understanding of my research questions.

Participant observations are valuable because "implicit features in social life are more likely to be revealed as a result of the observer's continued presence and because of the observer's ability to observe behaviour rather than just rely on what is said" (Bryman, 2001:328). Thus, participant observations are crucial for generating reliable data as "[t]he researcher's prolonged immersion in a social setting would seem to make him or her better equipped to see as others see" (Bryman, 2001:328). My intention was to place myself in situations in which my continued involvement would allow me to gradually infiltrate the students' school-based social worlds in an attempts to successfully infuse myself into their lives at school. My extensive involvement in this social setting allowed me to map out the students' behaviour more fully as I observed these students in a variety of different situations, "so that links between behaviour and context can be forged" (Bryman, 2001: 329).

ii.   *Unstructured and semi-structured interviews*

Unstructured and semi-structured interviews form an integral part of ethnographic research, as they are able to generate insights into the interviewees' point of view. Unstructured interviews, as a conversational style, allow the interviewee "to respond freely, with the interviewer simply responding to points that seem worthy of being followed up" (Bryman, 2001:314). Although these interviews are similar in style to a conversation, I made use of an *aide mémoire*, which included a brief set of prompts which dealt with my chosen topics. The various unstructured interviews that were conducted differed in function and structure from semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in carefully chosen setting. These interviews took the form of a more structured conversation. Questioning was guided by an interview schedule, which allowed the questioning to flow in a logical manner, covering the topics I wished to explore. These questions formed the basis of my participant interviews and the questions contained similar wording for all interviewees. It should be noted that in unstructured or semi-structured qualitative interviewing, interviewers do not slavishly follow a schedule, as is done in quantitative research interviewing. This has to do with the belief that one cannot start out with too many preconceptions. "What is crucial is that the questioning allows interviewers to glean the ways in which research participants view their social world and that there is flexibility in the conduct of the interviews" (Bryman, 2001:317).

iii.   *Focus group discussions*

A focus group is generally understood to be a group of participants led by an interviewer who asks questions about a particular topic. Brooker (2001) views focus group discussions as a method that encourages children to develop and articulate their thoughts. Smithson (2009) believes that focus group discussions enable research participants "to develop ideas collectively, bringing forward their own priorities and perspectives" (p. 359). Data produced by focus group discussions has elements of both a 'natural' discussion on a topic as well as a constrained group interview with set questions. Advantages of using focus group discussions include that they allow the researcher to obtain data while observing a large amount of group interaction on a specific topic within a short period of time (Smithson, 2009). In ethnographic research focus group discussions are viewed to be a way of emphasising the collective nature of experience.

This study is interested in the girls' group dynamics and their interactions outside the classroom but also in the focus group discussions. For this study I conducted two focus group discussions with the five participating girls. The theme for the first focus group discussion focused on the physical and social resources available in the school setting. The second focus group discussion concentrated on collecting qualitative data on the place-making practices that the girls engage in. The questions focused specifically on how they form peer-affiliations, how they congregate in space and how they negotiate group social identities.

iv.   *Elicitation methods as qualitative research instruments*

I utilised the final two data-collection methods in order to produce richer and more meaningful data from the student participants: photo-elicitation interviewing and photo-diaries. These methods were instrumental in eliciting deep emotional responses related to the affective place attachment dimension of place-making and the students' place-based identities.

v.   *Photographs in social research*

The use of photographs as a tool for either collecting data or documenting observations has been successfully adopted in various research fields. For Bourdieu photography is "sociologically interesting because it both portrays the social world and it betrays the choices made by the person holding the camera" (Bourdieu in Back, 2009: 474). Photography can be utilised in various ways in social research practices in both sociology and education. Back (2009) states that "photography continues to have something of a marginal place within a discipline that remains dominated by the word and figure" (p. 471) and I therefore argue for a more prominent place for visual aids in interview processes with children and young people. Photography played an integral role as part of my research.

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vi.   *Student produced photographs of informal school space*

The critical practice of students taking photographs of informal school spaces must recognise that "a photograph must be read not as an image, but as a text, and as with any text it is open to a diversity of readings" (Grosvenor, 2004:318). Meaning was attached to photographs by the participant photographers themselves in individual elicitation interviews, and not by the researcher. As such the collection of data is viewed as collaborative research. Each individual participant was provided with a digital camera (for the duration of one school day) and invited to take a collection of photos of informal school spaces that hold significance for them. For ethical reasons the participants were encouraged to take photographs of places rather than people. These images then became the basis for individual interviews in which students described their understandings and feelings regarding the significance of the spaces captured in the photographs (Carson et al., 2005).

These photographs and the participants' comments on them portray what each individual participant 'sees' through the lens of the camera. Studies using this method (Brown, 2005; Grosvenor, 2004) have found that there are great differences in terms of subject selection, framing and angle of photographs produced by various students. Students as such become photographic researchers and are able to participate more intimately in the study. This participant collaboration created an opportunity to "make explicit what they implicitly know about the spaces in the school, who it is that 'hangs out' there and with whom" (Carson et al., 2005:169).

vii.   *Photo-elicitation interviews*

One way of utilising photography in social research is called 'photo-elicitation', which refers to "the use of a single or sets of photographs as stimulus during a research interview. It aims to trigger responses and memories and unveil participants' attitudes, views, beliefs, and meanings or to investigate group dynamics" (Meo, 2010:150). I conducted one photo-elicitation interview with each of the participants. In the photo-elicitation interview a selection of each specific participant's photographs was used as stimulus for the interview. Consequently, each photo-elicitation interview was a unique experience, as it was dependent on the photographs taken by each of the participants. Although each interview was distinct from the other, all interviews were aided by a standard interview guide. Also, detailed photo-elicitation guidelines and a specific photo-elicitation consent form were utilised and discussed with participants.

Some central advantages of photo-elicitation interviewing include: promoting rapport; enabling researchers to grasp young people's viewpoints and social worlds; triggering richer conversations; and bridging the distant social and cultural worlds of the researcher and research subject (Meo, 2010:150). The inclusion of photographs in interviews has the potential to allow the participants to

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use the images to engage more confidently in conversation in response to the familiarity of the photographs (Meo, 2010:150). I therefore envisioned the inclusion of photo-elicitation in my research work to produce rich and detailed responses from the participants regarding their emotional connotations to objects, people and places, which I believe it yielded.

viii. *Student produced writing: Photo-diaries*

As a final addition to my data-collection methods I included written pieces by the student participants. These are in the form of diary entries that include the participants' own reflective thoughts regarding the school spaces and their own and others' place-making practices. The participants were encouraged to write a few sentences of selected images and to include reference to their feelings and memories of those spaces. This activity was conducted after the photo-elicitation interviews and they utilised their own photographs as images to contemplate.

I intended this activity to serve (together with the taking of photographs) as thought-generating stimulus for the participants' reflections on their actions in the informal spaces of school. These diary entries also served as a tool to enable those participants who have difficulty communicating their thoughts verbally in focus groups or interviews to express themselves by utilising an alternative medium, such as writing.

1.10   Definition of Key Terminology

Affective place attachment

'Affective place attachment' is the result of the emotional connections that an individual makes with a physical environment while building their place-based identity. It refers to a relationship that is created between the individual and the place through a process of identifying with and constructing an attachment to the specific place (adapted from Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011).

Behavioural place dependence

'Behavioural place dependence' refers to the quality and the availability of physical and social resources of a place and how these resources influence and guide behaviours and activities in that place (adapted from Stokels & Shumaker, 1981; Kyle et al., 2005; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011).

Identifications

The term 'identification' is viewed as the on-going construction of identity – a process through which individuals shape their projects, including their plans for their own lives, with reference to available labels and available identities (Appiah, 2005).

Peri-urban area

A peri-urban area is an area usually on the outskirts of a town or city between the consolidated urban and the rural regions.

Place

A 'place' is a physical site where various spaces intersect. A 'place' is not a static entity, but a somewhere "constantly lived, experienced and reordered by those who move through it" (Nespor, 1997:95). A 'place' consists of various dimensions, which include physical and social as well as emotional aspects (Massey, 1995).

Place-based identities

Place-based identity is seen as a substructure of identity and deals with people-environment relationships. An individual's place-based identity is the specific identity that she builds in relation to the physical environment in which she finds herself (adapted from Proshansky, 1983; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011).

Place-making

'Place-making' is the process by which people construct places as they engage in complex individual and communal interactions within a complexity of networks and interactions in various social spaces. Integral in the process of 'place-making' are the identifications and attachments that people make whilst engaged in these complex interactions and negotiations (adapted from Nespor, 1997; O'Donoghue 2007; Tupper et al., 2008).

Place-making practices

'Place-making practices' are the social activities associated with the process of place-making. These 'place-making practices' incorporate socially interactive behaviour, which includes how people form peer-affiliations and arrange themselves in groups, and how they congregate in specific spaces (adapted from Tupper et al., 2008).

Socially interactive behaviour

Socially interactive behaviour considers the social integration and interactions of individuals and groups of people who 'live' in specific spaces (adapted from Proshansky et al., 1995; O'Toole & Were, 2008; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011).

Space

'Space' is something which is produced and can be divided into three 'fields of space': physical, mental and social space (Lefebvre, 1991).

1.11   Structure of the thesis

This is a thesis by articles. It consists of two articles and two wraparound chapters, i.e. the Introduction and the Conclusion. This section of the thesis, the introductory chapter, has provided background to the study and described the foundation for this specific research focus. The main research question and sub-questions are outlined and the research aims and objectives have been specified. I have situated the research study by presenting a detailed evaluation of the scope and limitations of this study and include a discussion of the research design and a comprehensive description of the chosen methodology and research methods used. Finally, I presented a list of definitions for the key terminology used.

The introductory chapter is followed by two articles. The first article explores the socio-spatial dynamics related to the lives of two high school girls in the out-of-classroom spaces of their school. I employ Lefebvre's (1971/1991) spatial triad, consisting of the interaction between the physical, social and mental dimensions of space, as the conceptual foundation for understanding how girls turn space into place at their high school. The article focuses on two Grade 10 girls, Hannah and Ariya, and their place-making practices at, and place-based identifications with, their high school. Physical, social and mental spaces are used as categories through which a narrative of the girls' place-making at this specific school is understood. This study utilised various ethnographic and visual data-collection methods, including unstructured, semi-structured and photo-elicitation interviews; participant observation; focus group discussions; student-produced photography and photo-diaries. I found that the way in which the girls inhabit and 'make place' in the school's out-of-classroom spaces is determined by their unique interactions with the school's expressive culture and the subsequent social networks, movements and practices that they mobilise in these spaces, which in turn influence their identifications in the school and ultimately the place that they create.

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The second article focuses on the 'affective place-making' practices of each of the five research participants. The article responds to the question: How do high school girls' affects and social bodies contribute to their place-making practices and to the type of place they make of their school? The focus is on understanding the affective, emotional and interactional dimensions that constitute the five girls' strategic interactions in the out-of-classroom spaces of their school. Drawing on theories of affect, the article is based on a six-month ethnographic research study at Mount Valley High (pseudonym). I present three specific incidents from the data to illustrate each of the key dimensions that I believe relate to the girls' affective place-making practices. I develop the idea that spaces such as schools become places as a result of the interaction between the 'expressive' institutional culture of the school, on the one hand, and the vigorous interaction of the students' engagement with each other in the various spaces of school, on the other. I present the three critical incidents in order to advance a conceptual argument about the link between affect and place-making in the light of the school's expressive culture. I argue that the girls in the study interpret the culture of their school and act in response to its discourses. They go on to 'make place' in highly specific ways by recreating the school as a place through a combination of individual, group and strategic place-making practices, turning the school into a particular place.

The concluding chapter (Chapter Four restates the research rationale and describes the main theoretical framework and the methodological approach which guided the study. I finally present an analytical summary of my findings followed by the analytical conclusion, which responds to the main research question and states my main argument.

1.12   In conclusion

This chapter has introduced and unpacked the main research question addressed by this thesis:

> *To what extent do high school girls 'make place' while negotiating their place-based identities in the informal spaces of their independent high school?*

I have introduced the thesis's focal point, which is to explore the practice of place-making and the construction of place-based identifications in educational spaces. The investigation into the complex processes of making place and forming identifications are studied to illustrate how educational spaces and the people who inhabit it continuously affect and change each other. High school students move through their school to occupy various spaces (physical, mental and social) from where they proceed to make peer affiliations, form social networks and negotiate their emerging identities.

In order to understand youth identity formation in school spaces, it is crucial to acknowledge that the schooling landscape in South Africa has transformed during the post-apartheid period. What has emerged is a heterodox schooling landscape, which refers to, among other things, the blurred lines between what defines private and public schooling, with consequences for the emergence of a complex quasi-educational market (see Woolman & Fleisch 2006). The girls who participated in this study 'live' this heterodox schooling landscape, and as such should be considered an example of how young people are encountering their educational spaces in this complex educational landscape.

The thesis is thus an attempt to show how a group of high school girls go about finding and making place in their school-going at their high school. I start from the assumption that their interactions with their school spaces, their active participation in 'making place,' inform the identifications that they make in the school in a very specific way. A focus on their place-making practices in the informal out-of-classroom spaces of the school allow me to understand how the various aspects of space, i.e. physical space, social space and mental space, work together in order to construct a specific place. The term 'making place' refers to the way that the girls influence, negotiate and manage the simultaneous interaction of the three dimensions of space as they occur at any particular moment in time.

This thesis is offered as a contribution towards understanding how these girls are figuring out their young lives. The ways in which their presence in the physical spaces of their school is related to their school-going experience should provide insights into young people's lives at school. These insights, I believe, should contribute to the ways we re-imagine schooling in these complex times in order to better relate to, and engage with, students who make complex identifications within the confines of their school.

CHAPTER 2 (Article 1)

Turning space into place: The socio-spatial dynamics of high school girls' school-going lives outside of the classroom

(This article was submitted to the journal, *Journal of Educational Studies*, in June 2016. It is currently under review).

2.1   Abstract

This article explores the socio-spatial dynamics related to two high school girls' lives in the out-of-classroom spaces of their school. I employ Lefebvre's (1971/1991) spatial triad, consisting of the interaction between the physical, social and mental dimensions of space, as the conceptual foundation for understanding how girls turn space into place at their high school. The article focuses on two Grade 10 girls, Hannah and Ariya, and their place-making practices at, and place-based identifications with, their high school. Physical, social and mental space are used as categories through which a narrative of the girls' place-making at this specific school is understood. This study utilised various ethnographic and visual data-collection methods, including unstructured, semi-structured and photo-elicitation interviews; participant observation; focus group discussions; student-produced photography and photo-diaries. I found that the way in which the girls inhabit and 'make place' in the school's out-of-classroom spaces is determined through their unique interactions with the school's expressive culture and the subsequent social networks, movements and practices that they mobilise in these spaces, which in turn influence their identifications in the school, and ultimately with the place that they create.

2.1   Introduction

School spaces form an integral part of young people's daily encounters with the world. These spaces should thus be viewed as significant sites where insights into the social identifications of youths can be obtained. The term 'identification' is understood in this article as the on-going construction of identity through the processes that individuals engage in to strategise and construct plans for their lives, with reference to available labels and available identities (Appiah, 2005). In this article I understand these identifications as constructed through the students' interactions with each other and the various dimensions of their school spaces.

The article emphasises 'place-making' as an ongoing process entwined in students' daily school-based lives. I argue that while these students are negotiating their place-based identifications, they

are actively busy making place through their interactions at school. The term 'making place' refers to the way that the girls influence, negotiate and manage the simultaneous interaction of Lefebvre's (1971/1991) articulated dimensions of space – physical, social and mental – as they occur at a particular moment in time. This article focuses on the movements and activities of two female students, specifically their practices in the out-of-classroom spaces of their school. The two girls, Hannah and Ariya (pseudonyms), attend Mount Valley High (pseudonym), an independent school on the outskirts of Cape Town. They are in Grade 10 and formed part of a larger research participant group. These two girls were selected as they both expressed firm and intimate connectedness with the school, but were interacting in distinctive ways in the various spaces of the school.

Integral to their interactions were the relationship between their initial identifications when they arrived at the school and the school's expressive culture. I use the notion of expressive culture here in the way that Bernstein, Elvin & Peters (1966:429) describe it, namely as consisting of activities, procedures and judgments involved in the school's production and transmission of values and norms, which in turn are the sources of the school's shared identity and cohesiveness. In this light, Mount Valley High exhibits an inclusive expressive culture that is evident in its daily operations. This is a consequence of the school's emphasis on an open and relaxed school ethos; flexible physical arrangements; the availability of supportive resources; and the relaxed and congenial relationships. Firmly established, its expressive culture aims to cultivate sensitivity and respect among and between its students and staff. It is important to note that the school's particular expressive culture attracts and situates each student uniquely in its environs, and influences the identifications they make with the place.

The article discusses the nature and extent of these two girls' identifications with their school by focusing on their lives in its informal spaces. The aim of the investigation on which this article is based is to understand how the school influences the girls and how the girls, in response to the physical space and expressive culture of the school, respond socially and develop their close connections with the school. I argue that an integration of the girls' practices across the physical, social and mental dimensions of space contribute to the nature of the identifications that they made, and to the ways in which they chose to project themselves when engaging in place-making in the school.

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2.3   Theorising place-making and place-based identifications

To understand place-making one must investigate theories addressing the production of space and specifically how it is turned into a so-called place and given meaning by the people who inhabit it. The terms 'place' and 'space' are conceptualised as interrelated yet understood as distinct. In order to clarify my theorising, I turn to the pioneering work of Henri Lefebvre (1971/1991) on the production of space. Lefebvre believed that "[s]ocially lived space and time, socially produced, depends on physical and mental constructs" (Elden, 2004:190). He noted that space is produced as a social formation and as a conception, a mental construction. From these ideas Lefebvre derives his conceptual triad of spatial practice in terms of which he views space in three ways: perceived, lived and conceived. Space is understood as a unity of physical, social and mental space (Lefebvre, 1971/1991).

The triad of spatial practice firstly considers physical space such as the school's physical buildings, grounds and environment. This dimension of space is also referred to as perceived space, i.e. that which we can experience with our senses. Secondly, space consists of a lived dimension, known as social space. Here "space is produced and modified over time and through its use … invested with symbolism and meaning" (Elden, 2004:190). Thirdly, space entails a mental dimension, imagined space, or conceived space. When Lefebvre (1971/1991) refers to mental space, he refers to it as 'the space of the philosopher', a dimension of place that pertains to the metaphysical and ideological. Mental or conceived space is also conceptualised as *representational of space* − i.e. the meaning that people derive from their experiences with space and consequently the way that they construct mental representations of reality. For my application in this study and for use in my analysis I view this mental dimension of space as a spatial conception which the high school girls, as occupants of their high school, utilise and which forms an integral part in their place-making at school. I conceptualise this mental aspect of space as a mental process that occurs continuously while a person is experiencing the physical and the social. Mental space thus refers to the way in which the girls imagine the school, an aspect of space which influences the formation of their attachments and place-based identifications.

2.3.1 From space to place

People create places while they are engaged in diverse and complex social interactions and mental conceptualisations inside of physical spaces. 'Empty' or 'lifeless' physical space is transformed into something 'lived' through the presence of people and their interactions with each other as they are engaged in making it a place. I can therefore distinguish 'place' as "emerging from a complex web

of ongoing relations (material, social and discursive) and forms of practice, which in turn participate in the production of experiences, the composition of subjectivity and the construction of meaning in specific spaces" (Gagnon, 2014:3). Schools are not fixed containers, but physical places shaped by people and their actions, and are subject to interpretation and the meaning-making processes of those who inhabit these spaces. The idea of place-making implies that places are not natural occurrences; places are constructed by people as they are engaged in complex interactions within a complexity of networks and intersections within lived space (Tupper, Carson, Johnson & Mangat, 2008). The notion of place can be re-conceptualised as "a meeting-place, the location of the intersection of particular bundles of activity spaces, of connections and interrelations, of influences and movements" (Massey, 1995:59).

In school, students' perceptions of school spaces are intimately connected to how places are negotiated and occupied (Tupper et al., 2008:1088). Students' encounters and interactions with school spaces beyond the classroom are significant to students' lived experiences of school. Experiences are closely connected to feelings and thus this emotional dimension influences our encounters with space and place. Therefore, to identify with a place is to imply strong feelings associated with that place (Rose, 1995) and indicates that this place is (or has been) lived, sensed and experienced. Our experiences of, and feelings connected to, school can be deeply emotional and convey our attachment to others and the identifications we make with school. Therefore, to identify with a place entails being involved in the construction of that place. Place is created, (re)produced and shaped by the people who inhabit it.

2.3.2 The process of place-making

The making of a place involves a dynamic interaction between Lefebvre's (1971/1991) three 'fields of space'. It entails an interaction between the physical or materiality of the school, the social dimension created by the students (and other inhabitants), as well as the mental aspects related to how the school is imagined by each individual, and essentially how they view themselves in relation to the school via their identifications.

Examining the materiality of the informal, out-of-classroom spaces together with the ways in which the students inhabit and move through these spaces will assist me in understanding how students' place-based identifications are formed through their school-going experiences. When scrutinising the physical school structures and available resources, the specific physicality, the built environment and way that it is organised should be central. McGregor (2004a) argues that schools are built and organised in order to produce particular social interactions; therefore, the physical

space becomes integral to the specifics of the social relations that occur. Material spaces become active and actor, rather than remaining passive décor or background (Gumperz in Hirst & Vadeboncoeur, 2006:205). School architecture, the physical buildings, "allow[s] certain movements and prohibits others, like the timetables that prescribe the daily activities, like the arrangements of cellular spaces that impose an external structure on the body that becomes internalised" (Staiger, 2005:568). The physical structure including the aesthetics of the school building "contributes to the many ways in which students move through, occupy, and feel about particular school spaces" (Tupper et al., 2008:1067). Therefore, a relationship between the physical structure and the social culture is encouraged in a school.

Lefebvre (1971/1991) claims that it is almost impossible to capture the concept of space in a linear fashion; instead, he sees space as something which is produced and evolves through the social relations that occur within it. Although space seems natural, it is profoundly social. Space shapes us, just as we shape it (Baker & Foote, 2006:93). Social relations do not just occur *in* physical space, but place and space are produced through the social (Massey, 2005). The creation of social space involves people, objects, movement as well as language and is a consequence of the interaction of all these elements in creating lived experiences and creating meaning (Hirst & Vadeboncoeur, 2006; Frelin & Grannäs, 2014).

The specifics of where we are and at what times we are there are connected to how we make sense of who we are; thus the specifics of space profoundly influence our sense of self (Baker & Foote, 2006). Students' behaviour at school is closely related to how they conceive and imagine those locales in relation to themselves. This aspect of student life in schools relates to the mental dimension of space. I utilise the mental dimension of Lefebvre's spatial triad as the space where students engage in constructing mental and consequently emotional connections to school. The mental dimension of space becomes the meaning-making component in the 'factory' of constructing a place. I therefore propose that it is in the mental dimension where students construct 'images' of school and of themselves in relation to school, in other words, where they are negotiating their place-based identifications.

When considering place-based identifications, the student's personal identity is defined in relation to the specific environment, in this case the school (Proshansky, 1983). Complex patterns of cognition are forged in relation to specific 'places' and include "conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, values, goals, preferences, skills, meanings, and behavioural tendencies" (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011:345). I argue that "[t]he individual builds place identity to the extent that he or she feels attached to it" (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011:346). Thus, for an individual to

willingly maintain a relationship with a specific place, a link needs to be created through a process of identifying with and constructing an attachment to the specific place (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). The fundamental objective of this article is to illustrate how the various socio-spatial processes at a school interact and enable each of the students to shape the place of school, thereby emphasising the prominence of the place-making process as something integral to the everyday lives of school going youths.

2.4   Methodology

An in-depth ethnographic research approach was utilised in order to conduct an analysis of the processes involved when high school girls make place. Ethnography is a research strategy often used in the field of social science research and is "concerned with [the] multi-layered complexity of the social" (Fataar, 2010:8). It "seeks to understand the relationship of culture to social structures that largely escape the awareness of actors while influencing how they act" (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002:689). The ethnographic research approach provided opportunities for the voices, experiences and practices of the research participants to be heard. It allowed me access into the lifeworlds of the students, which enabled me, to some extent, to become an 'insider', rather than an outsider looking in. I adopted an observer stance based on immersion in the concrete, everyday world of these high school girls, so that I could better understand them as student participants and their lives at school (Titchen & Hobson, 2005). Although my broader study focuses on a group of five Grade 10 female student participants, for this article I chose to focus on two of the girls, Hannah and Ariya.

Ethnographic research involves a substantial amount of interviewing and entails an extended period of participant observation in order to come to deeper understanding of those being observed. In the time I spent at the school with the girls I collected rich qualitative data with the following methods: participant observations, focus group discussions, individual semi-structured interviews, student-produced photographs, photo-elicitation interviews as well as photo-diaries. Unstructured and semi-structured interviews form an integral part of ethnographic research, as they are able to generate insights into the interviewees' point of view. my use of unstructured interviews allowed me to clarify my observations and to strike up informal conversations with the students. These informal conversations differed in function and structure from the semi-structured interviews, which took on a more structured form of conversation. The conversations were guided by interview schedules, which allowed the conversation to flow in a logical manner, covering the topics I wished to explore. The focus group discussions, on the other hand, encouraged the participants to articulate their

thoughts in the presence of the group and enabled them to "develop ideas collectively, bringing forward their own priorities and perspectives" (Smithson, 2009:359).

Photographs played an integral role as part of the research and became especially important with the use of elicitation methods. I used student-produced photographs not only as data items themselves, but as stimuli during a method referred to as photo-elicitation interviewing. The students were asked to take photographs of school spaces which held significance for them and these photographs were then utilised in the elicitation interviews as a visual tool to trigger and support thoughts, memories and emotions regarding these physical spaces. Each student then used a selection of their photographs to create photo-diaries, where they wrote about their memories and feelings related to specific spaces at school. These tools enabled the students to become participants in the data-collection process and as such the research turned into a collaborative effort. Through utilising this range of methods, my aim was to extract the most meaningful data in the time that I spent in the field. The aim of this ethnographic approach was to elicit understanding of the socio-spatial processes that made these two girls connect strongly with this specific school and to explain their place-making processes and how they differ from not only the rest of the participating group, but from each other, in order to arrive at an explanation of how space is turned into place.

2.5   Data presentation: Hannah and Ariya

Mount Valley High is situated in a peri-urban suburb of Cape Town on a farm-like setting with many plant-rich outdoor spaces and scattered classroom structures, which provides a setting conducive to the development of its inclusive and flexible expressive culture. This school actively goes about attracting and integrating children who find this openness and diversity appealing and accommodating to their individual needs. Hannah and Ariya, both in Grade 10 girls, decided to attend Mount Valley High after searching for a suitable high school near their homes. They both found what they referred to as "a home" when they settled in at Mount Valley High. Significantly, they struggled to fit into the culture of their previous schools and risked dropping out. However, at Mount Valley High something was different for both these girls that made them express their strong place-based identifications in its environs.

Hannah is an energetic, cheerful and talkative girl at school. As an extrovert, she enjoys interacting with a large diversity of people and the various spaces at school offer her ample opportunity for creating and sustaining her large social network. At home, however, she has to tolerate a physically and verbally abusive mother, a single parent, who restricts her movements by denying her access to the outside world. A clear divide between home and school is evident in Hannah's current life

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situation. Ariya has a similar tale, which includes emotional suffering as part of her domestic lifeworld. She has been estranged from her mother for many years and more recently has been dealing with the death of her father. She explains that personal disasters in her life caused her to be ill-behaved and aggressive at her previous schools, which led to feelings of disconnection with her schooling, until she arrived at Mount Valley High. Mount Valley High managed to accommodate and assimilate both these girls into its schooling culture. Both of them verbalised their close connections to the school, which they referred to as a place where they "feel like home". My quest was to find out why this specific school could become such a different space from their previous schools for these two girls, and how their being there, together with the other students, influenced the school becoming a particular place for them.

2.5.1 Physical space: Occupying out-of-classroom spaces

This section shows how both girls go about occupying and utilising the available physical and social resources in personally-driven and diverse ways. This discussion is based on a combination of photographic images of favourite school spaces taken by them and each of their comments to explain their perceptions and feelings with regards to these spaces. The informal, out-of-classroom school spaces, as illustrated by the images below, included hallways, playgrounds, outdoor quads, the steps and other commonly available outdoor spaces in and around the school buildings. The loosely arranged, scattered classroom buildings situated in and around patches of grass, gardens and trees made many private and secluded spaces available for their place-making practices.

Hannah's physical occupation of school space

As portrayed by her wide variety of photographs and elaborate comments below, Hannah made optimal use of available physical spaces and resources at school in order to grow and maintain her large social network.

Figure 2.1. Hannah: "I enjoy being here, watching the people walk past and the friends you can make here. For me it's the start of starting people's day. If I see someone sad, I'll go to them and go on with them until they laugh. So to me its like a positive start of a day basically"

Figure 2.2. Hannah: "We stand there and we talk and this is where they play music. I like to be there, because we sing and dance and its fun. If you want to join in you can come and a lot of people can mix up here. All grades, special needs class, boys and girls"

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Figure 2.3. Hannah: "This is where everybody gets together when its raining after school and then we sit and talk here. It would be like that happy moment where you make jokes and stuff"

Figure 2.4. Hannah: "The tuck shop is a place where I love to be. I love to eat; it brings me joy to eat. Its entertaining when the ball flies past and the people react. The boys play soccer on the grass here"

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Figure 2.5. Hannah: "This is where a lot of people go in groups, in small groups and then they interact like in their own way. So, people sit by the chairs, they sit under the tree and then I would just like walk past and go to that group and then to that group and stand there. Some people sit on the steps, some people on the bench or on the grass"

This selection of photographs taken by Hannah demonstrates her presence in a wide range of physical spaces in the school in order for her to grow and maintain her social status and popularity. I observed that Hannah is strategic in covering a range of spaces in order to connect with numerous of her peers, even staff members and parents. In the light of her comments on her occupation of these physical spaces, it is evident that Hannah communicates her desire to create and sustain positive relationships and to be accepted by many. By doing this she believes that she can enjoy her time at school as well as contribute to the joy and wellbeing of others.

Ariya's physical occupation of school space

Contrary to Hannah's mobility, Ariya's chosen photographs portray her daily locatedness at school. Her choice of images reveals her restricted use of the physical school spaces and resources available to her at school. Ariya chose to occupy mainly one space with her small group of friends outside of classrooms.

Figure 2.6. Ariya: "This is the place that we are use to and we enjoy sitting there, because we are together. Other people walk past and then they feel intimidated, because we're like 'bigger' than them, or we'll just look at them and they will be scared. When people have to go to the toilet [situated in this space] then they will take forever in the bathroom to try and avoid us. We control this space. If you sit in our space then I'll tell you to move, because I sit there"
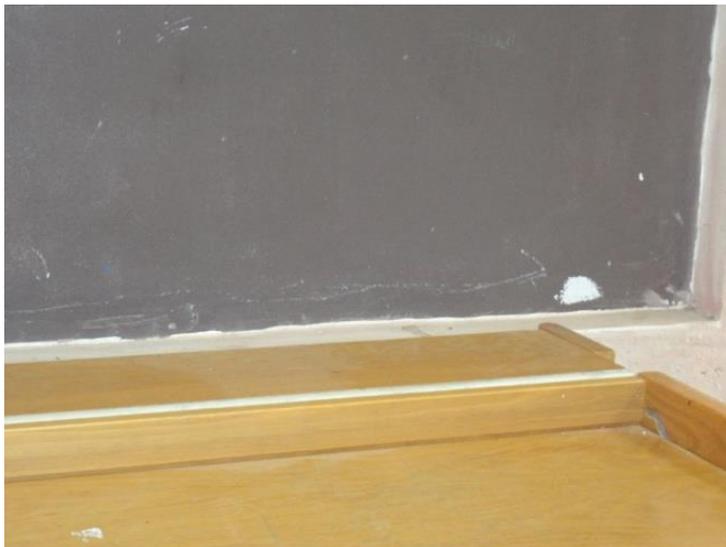

Figure 2.7. Ariya: "This is my safe space. This is the corner where I sit. It's like *my* little space and then J sits next to me. I will get annoyed if someone else sits there and tell him or her to leave. You see me sitting there all the time. I'm use to that space, it's my space"

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Figure 2.8. Ariya: "My bag is very important to me. I take it everywhere, because I keep all my stuff in my bag. This is my private space"

Contrary to Hannah, Ariya's chosen set of photographic images and comments illustrate her restricted spatial mobility outside the classroom. Although Ariya is restricted in her movements, I observed that she ensures dominance over her choice of physical space, even if it pertains to a specific seat or the importance of the privacy of her schoolbag. Ariya positioned herself socially as a dominant figure amongst her social group, often referred to as the 'cool kids' of Grade 10. I observed how Ariya acquired her 'cool' status through expressing a social harshness towards others in her occupation of this specific physical space, not permitting others to access this space, claiming the territory as if she and her group of friends owned the space. Rebellious Ariya would, through a blatant expression of bullying behaviour, demarcate 'her' space as exclusive, only permitting herself and the other 'cool' kids access, thereby rejecting any of the other students.

Ariya's and Hannah's photographs and comments demonstrate their attempts to claim spaces which they can call their own. However, the spaces that they chose to occupy differ greatly depending on their social needs. Hannah would move about and connect with many students in various spaces, whereas Ariya would locate herself in a specific spot for her exclusive use. Hannah negotiated alliances with a much wider range of her peers by becoming strategically mobile in order to assert her social status, whereas Ariya utilised a less mobile use of physical space as a strategy to assert her social dominance with greater effect.

2.5.2   Social space: Constructing peer networks

The negotiation of peer affiliations and the consequent construction of a peer network is integral to the creation of the social dimension of school space. Hannah's and Ariya's different ways of constructing their individual social networks illustrate the various ways by which social acceptance and assertion can be accomplished at school. Both these girls find a unique way of constructing and maintaining a peer network that leads them to become embedded in the school, each in their distinct ways.

Hannah's mobility and Ariya's locatedness form the basis of their social habits at school. Being more mobile meant that Hannah could connect with a wider range of students, which included students from both the school's primary and high school sections. Hannah also expressed her desire to broaden her social network at school. She enjoyed conversations with teachers outside of the classroom and often connected with other non-teaching staff members as well as parents at the school gate or in the administration block. Through my observations I could understand that Hannah visibly maintained her social network on a daily basis. She moved around during break times to 'visit' with all the various groups of peers that she enjoyed connecting with, thereby maintaining these relationships. Her social mobility ensured her membership of a variety of social groups at school. Hannah would move around and seek out certain peers to connect with depending on the activities that she was interested in on that specific day. Her daily activities would vary from sitting around and talking about popular trends in clothing, television programmes and especially music, singing, dancing and hanging around at the tuck shop for something to eat. When asked to label herself according to the available social labels at school – which included terms such as the 'cool kids', 'rhinos', 'nerds' and 'smarties' – Hannah struggled to label or define herself. She explained that she feared being seen as part of only one peer group, and as such be left out of other groups, which would compromise her popularity at school.

In contrast to Hannah's mobile social practices, Ariya expressed her affiliation to the 'cool' kids' group, which is the only group of people that she chose to connect with. Outside of the classroom this group of friends would congregate in 'their' space, away from most other students, a space which they claimed as their own and which they dominate. The 'cool kids' thought of themselves as typical teenagers who liked to party over weekends, occasionally drank alcohol, as well as dated 'like-minded' boys and girls. Ariya positioned herself as one of the main members of this group. The girls in the group describe their interactions as often motivated by fights over boys and slandering each other. Ariya knew all her friends in this group from one of her previous primary schools and expressed the idea that the length of time that they knew each other had created a

feeling of security amongst them as a peer group. In this group Ariya feels comfortable and secure enough for her to express herself openly and honestly.

Hannah's establishment and maintenance of an elaborate peer network versus Ariya's restricted exclusive selection of peers positioned each of them on a socio-spatial level inside of their school. Their successful occupation of their carefully selected school spaces and consequent peer networks have embedded both girls firmly in the school. Their socio-spatial practices have enabled each of them to form a particular type of attachment to the school, which I believe led to the expression of their strong place-based identifications.

2.5.3 Mental space: place-based identifications and attachments

My reference to 'mental space' (see Lefebvre, 1971/1991) allows me to describe how Hannah and Ariya, through their interactions with their physical and social school spaces, have interpreted and consequently conceptualised or imagined their school. Mental space refers to 'the space of the philosopher', conceived space, also conceptualised as *representations of space* – the meaning that people derive from their experiences with space and consequently the way that they construct mental representations of reality (Lefebvre, 1971/1991).

The data portray the girls' place-making practices and illustrate the creation of the mental dimension regarding their school space. The data show how the girls view themselves in relation to the school through their expressed place-based attachments. Hannah's and Ariya's 'feeling at home', their desire for acceptance and belonging, for security and the creation of self-worth and value are all examples of how they have interpreted their experiences of the physical and social aspects at school and have consequently constructed what they define Mount Valley High to be for them. Both girls had a history of negative experiences at previous schools, but after coming to Mount Valley High they found a place which feels like home to them. In Nespor's (1997) terms, these two girls' socio-spatial practices have lead them – to use his term – to become 'embedded' in the fabric of the school.

Place identification is the expression of an individual's identification with a place and includes the expression of membership to a group of people defined by this particular location (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Hannah and Ariya strategically positioned themselves in specific spaces and in relation to particular peers as part of a larger ongoing process of identity construction. The girls conveyed a desire to maintain a level of personal distinctiveness or uniqueness; however, they simultaneously expressed their desire for greater self-worth and to be accepted into one or several peer groups (see Breakwell, 1986, 1992, 1993). For Ariya it was sufficient to affiliate with only one

group of her peers, while Hannah frequently stated that she was friends with everyone at school. The space offered both what they needed in order to feel secure and accepted at Mount Valley High.

In conversation with the girls they often referred to the difference between their previous public schools and their current private high school. The latter's inclusive culture suggested a distinctive lifestyle to which Ariya and Hannah could connect to strongly. Both girls seemed to "use a place-related self-referent in order to present themselves as distinct from others" outside of the school (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996:207). Ariya expressed her positive identifications with the peri-urban location of the school and its rural farm-like, peaceful atmosphere. She felt that the setting resonates with her domestic home environment and as such made her feel that she belonged as she had lost most of her familiar domestic spaces after her father passed away. Hannah, on the other hand, uses the place of school to create a sense of worth and social value (Korpela, 1989) that propel her outside of her domestic lifeworld into a world where she can reimagine and reposition herself through the place identifications that she establishes at school. At school Hannah is talkative and cheerful and projects a positive, care-free self-identity. It is evident that Mount Valley High provides Hannah with spaces where she is able to cultivate positive feelings about herself. The qualities of the place in essence enable Hannah to "gain a boost to her self-esteem" (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996:208) and as such generates her positive attachments to the school.

The ways in which these girls identify with place seemed partially to be a consequence of the interaction between their personal histories connected to their domestic lifeworlds and previous schooling experiences entangled with the behaviours the expressive culture of the school allowed for. As a result, each girl established and projected particular strong place identifications with Mount Valley High. While both girls expressed their close connection with the school, each one went about making their school a 'home' by utilising quite diverse practices, illustrating the particularity and multiplicity of the process of place-making.

2.6   Discussion

Hannah and Ariya utilised the school spaces in noticeably different ways. Hannah desired to move around in order to extend and maintain her large social network, whereas Ariya preferred to utilise one out-of-the-way location to carve out a private space for herself and her small group of friends. Each appropriated the physical landscape in order to fulfil their social needs. Importantly, they both explained that they could successfully negotiate a sense of belonging with their peers at Mount Valley High: Hannah, because of her success in maintaining her large social network, felt accepted

and special, something she did not experience at home; and Ariya, because she formed part of the 'cool' kids at school and could be part of a close-knit group, who served as a family-like group of friends in the absence of her deceased parents. In both cases the school became a place that was instrumental in responding to their personal needs for belonging and acceptance, and as such offered respite from the social void they experienced in their domestic environment.

A place, such as Mount Valley High, was viewed as "a meeting-place, the location of the intersection of particular bundles of activity spaces, of connections and interrelations, of influences and movements" (Massey, 1995:59). A place such as Mount Valley High should therefore not be seen as 'natural', but as constructed (Tupper et al., 2008). Hannah and Ariya constructed a place called Mount Valley High as perceived by each of them individually, while they engaged in unique social interactions within a complexity of networks and intersections in various physical spaces. Each girl interpreted and constructed opinions of the school in very particular ways, which led to their perceiving the school as a 'home'. This, I argue, is an amalgamation, or coming together, of the physical, the social and the mental dimensions of space into a singular articulation of a place. I emphasise Lefebvre's (1971/1991) three dimensions of space as providing me with a framework for understanding this process of place-making and clearly shows how the physical, social and mental dimensions of space interact in Hannah's and Ariya's lives at school in order to create a place which is unique for each of them. Elden (2004) stresses Lefebvre's argument that "space is not just discovered by humans and occupied, but in the process it is transformed" (p. 183), a transformation, which I refer to as place-making.

Each of the two girls engaged in place-making through giving of soul to their chosen physical spaces creating a place where they could connect with others, endowing the space with meaning and turning it into something lived. When observing the various out-of-classroom spaces, one notes students congregating in it, and when you look deeper you notice friendship, camaraderie, segregation, tension, fellowship, competition and a diversity of bodies interacting. This is where space is being made into a place by the place-making practices that occur inside of it. These public school spaces then become places where people want to spend their time, not because they have to, but because they choose to.

Hannah's and Ariya's previous schooling experiences were very negative compared to their experiences at Mount Valley High. Both girls constructed a strong bond and positive connections with the school. I argue that the coming together of their various social practices at the school at the intersection of the physical, social and mental dimensions of space (Lefebvre, 1971/1991) clarifies how they have negotiated their belonging at Mount Valley High. What is key to my argument is an

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understanding of the differences as well as the similarities related to Hannah's and Ariya's lives at school in order to gain insights into their place-making practices and consequent positive place identifications. Evidently, even though both girls formed positive attachments with the school, they have done so in diverse ways, illustrating how place-making is an individualised process, unique for every person.

Hannah made place through her optimal utilisation of the physical and social resources offered to her by Mount Valley High. She positioned herself through her mobility in order to generate and maintain her extensive social trajectories as she moved around a range of spaces in order to connect with a variety of her peers. She felt that her sense of belonging at school was subject to the size of her social network. The larger the network, the closer she would come to social ownership of the school. Hannah's social life at school had a marked influence on her self-image, which was to a great extent dependent on the identity she conveyed at school. For Hannah Mount Valley High was her only source of positive affirmation that she was accepted and loved by those around her. At home this was not the case. Her demeaning domestic circumstances forced her to seek acceptance and create a space of belonging somewhere else. Hannah's place-making at school thus functioned as a mechanism for her to sustain her identity in a positive way, rather than giving in to the negative social and emotional messages that she received at home. Through her mobile socio-spatial activities, mental representations and strong place identifications Hannah created a version, her version, of Mount Valley High, which was that it was a joyful, exciting, vibrant and accepting place, and which she imagined as closer to what home should feel like.

In contrast to Hannah's emphasis on her mobility at school, Ariya spent considerable time carving out a private space for herself and her peer group within the available out-of-classroom spaces at school. They collectively acted within this specific space in order to assert their social ownership of the space, which they could eventually call their own (Nespor, 1997). This act of claiming ownership of a space ensured their belonging in that space and therefore could utilise it in whichever way they chose in order to express and negotiate their identities individually as well as communally. Ariya's located place-making did not require her to seek acceptance from a variety of students all over the school landscape. By locating herself in a secluded space, with a limited number of peers, whom she had known for many years, Ariya sought to sustain her belonging to that group, which had a positive effect on her identifications with this school. It seemed that this group felt that by separating themselves from others made them superior to the rest of the students at Mount Valley High by forging some type of elite gang of 'cool kids' feared by most of the younger students. Ariya could, through her located place-making, establish a place of belonging for

herself among her close group of friends at school, something which was absent in her domestic lifeworld. She seemed have to created a small, close-knit 'family' for herself at school and as such came to call Mount Valley High her 'home'.

Nespor (1997) found that young people who were 'displaced from comfortable space' did not connect to the space in similar ways as those who were 'embedded' in the familiar space. Instead of feeling like disconnected entities merely passing through the space, Hannah and Ariya connected to the material and social spaces of Mount Valley High at a deeper level through imagining school as a place that feels like home. By doing this, they allowed school space to influence their personal identifications and as such extend and transform them (Nespor, 1997). I have described Hannah and Ariya as embedded in their school space. These girls negotiated vastly different social networks, but because of their personal socialisation and activities at school they became rooted in the school and established deep and extensive place-based identifications. The school became a familiar and desirable space for the two girls. And by acting within their school spaces in their particular ways Hannah and Ariya were actively involved in place-making practices, which shaped and re-organised the spaces they interacted with and moved through.

2.7   Conclusion

This article aimed to illustrate how two high school girls turn school space into place by actively engaging in the socio-spatial dynamics of their school-going lives in the informal spaces outside their classrooms. The analysis was based on ethnographic research and informed by Lefebvre's (1971/1991) theoretical account about the 'production of space'. I presented the argument that consideration of the girls' prior schooling experiences as well as understanding details about their domestic lives are crucial in understanding why they chose to connect so closely to this particular school. Furthermore, their social activities at school, referred to as place-making practices, situated each of them within Mount Valley High in a particular way. I found that the way in which the girls inhabited and 'made place' in the school's out-of-classroom spaces was determined by their unique interactions with the school's expressive culture and by the subsequent social networks, movements and practices that they mobilised in these spaces, which in turn influenced their identifications in the school and ultimately the place that they created for themselves at the school in order to fulfil their need to belong.

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CHAPTER 3 (Article 2)

The 'affective place-making' practices of high school girls at a private school in Cape Town, South Africa

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3.1   Abstract

This article focuses on the 'affective place-making' practices of girls at a private high school on the outskirts of Cape Town. The article responds to the question: How do high school girls' affects and social bodies contribute to their place-making practices and to the type of place they make of their school? My focus is on understanding the affective, emotional and interactional dimensions that constitute five girls' strategic interactions in the out-of-classroom spaces of their school. Drawing on theories of affect, the article is based on a six-month ethnographic research study at Mount Valley High (pseudonym). I present three specific incidents from my data to illustrate each of the key dimensions that I believe relate to the girls' affective place-making practices. I develop the idea that spaces such as schools become places as a result of the interaction between the 'expressive' institutional culture of the school, on the one hand, and the vigorous interaction of the students' engagement with each other in the various spaces of school, on the other. I present the three critical incidents in order to advance a conceptual argument about the link between affect and place-making in the light of the school's expressive culture. I argue that the girls in my study interpret the culture of their school and act in response to its discourses. They go on to 'make place' in highly specific ways by recreating the school as a place through a combination of individual, group and strategic place-making practices, turning the school into a particular place.

3.2   Introduction

There are specters haunting the classroom – bodies and affects. Yet, teachers and students are often not supposed to have bodies and affects because education should be about the acquisition of knowledge. (Zembylas, 2007: 19)

In this article bodies and affect take center stage in an exploration of how high school girls encounter and construct their school spaces. This article focuses on affective place-making in the

context of everyday school going. I emphasise the relationship between 'affect'[2] and 'place-making' through an exploration of the practices of five high school girls in relation to how they encounter, experience and live in the out-of-classroom spaces of their school. I suggest that the affective encountering of these school spaces is a key element of the way in which these girls live inside school and consequently 'make place'.

The concept of place-making suggests that people create places through their social interactions. My focus is on understanding the affective, emotional and interactional dimensions related to the five participants' individual, communal and strategic interactions. My contention is that a process starts with each girl's affective positioning, which is embedded in a fusion of her history, family, culture, language, race, as well as her previous experiences with schooling. I argue that each girl's affect is enacted via emotional responses to particular social encounters which in turn elicit actions and reactions. I show that the ways in which each girl chooses to act and react in such encounters go on to create her place identification and attachments in the school.

The article is based on a six-month ethnographic research study at a private high school on the outskirts of Cape Town. What is significant about this school is its unique 'expressive culture'. I use the term 'expressive culture' here in the way that Bernstein et al. (1966:429) describe it, namely as consisting of activities, procedures and judgments involved in the school's production and transmission of values and norms, which in turn are the sources of the school's shared identity and cohesiveness. What makes Mount Valley High (pseudonym) distinct from the surrounding public schools is its physical lay-out, which contributes to its uncommon character. When entering Mount Valley High one is struck by the ample open spaces and vegetation, which create a tranquil atmosphere. Classrooms are mainly small, loose-standing buildings tucked away behind trees, around corners and down narrow lanes. This design made available many private spaces for students to congregate as well as providing ample communal, more open and accessible spaces. The school's management worked hard to ensure an open-minded and inclusive approach, which it hoped would establish the school as an accepting place and accommodating of its diverse groups of students. Although Mount Valley High is not one of the most expensive and prestigious private schools in the area, it attracts a variety of students because of its open and inclusive culture. The expressive culture of the school derives from its objective of being an inclusive space, its architectural design and the operational philosophies of those in authority. The practice of place-

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[2] I understand affect from a sociological perspective as an embodied process that takes place before thought and before emotion, but that influences thought and emotion, and as a result people's actions (Zembylas, 2007).

making occurs as the girls actively engage and establish their identities in the light of the expressive culture of their specific school.

During my six months at Mount Valley High I utilised various data-collection instruments in order to gather rich and meaningful information from the five student participants. In this article I extract three specific incidents from my data to illustrate each of the key dimensions that I believe relate to the girls' affective place-making processes. I develop the idea that spaces such as schools become places as a result of the interaction between their 'stated' expressive culture, on the one hand, and the vigorous interaction of the students' engagement with each other in the various spaces of school, on the other hand. I present the three critical incidents in order to advance a conceptual argument about the link between affect and place-making in the light of the school's expressive culture. It is my aim to emphasise the complexity of school going and contend that bodies and affects should be granted greater consideration in institutions such as schools where multiple and diverse bodies collide (Zembylas, 2007).

3.3   Theoretical considerations: Affective place-making

My main task is to investigate a process which I have labelled *affective place-making*. Making sense of the participants' affective place-making requires an understanding of each girl individually as well as of her interactions with her peers inside of their school. I therefore construct a theoretical position that considers the girls socially as well as spatially. The objective is to illustrate how one's affect works through the body into emotions, flows out as action and reaction, and impacts not only on the people involved, but on the place and, as such, makes the place. Affect is understood as embodied dispositions and experiences that influence what people think, feel and do (Zembylas, 2007). Zembylas (2007) explains that affect should be understood "as both a process and a product; a *process* in which the body acts upon another, and a *product* as the capacity of a body to affect and be affected" (Zembylas, 2007:26). Affect is therefore intimately bodily. It registers on the body and is "carried by facial expressions, tone of voice, breath and sounds" (Mulcahy, 2012:12).

But what is affect? Affect is not feeling or emotion; it occurs before thought, emotion or interpretation, and functions as a form of bodily unconscious, a seemingly pre-cognitive, pre-personal state of being (Youdell & Armstrong, 2011; Watkins, 2011; Massumi, 1995). Watkins (2011) distinguishes emotion from affect by explaining that affect is something accumulated in the body and that emotions are the 'mindful acknowledgement' of my affective dispositions. Massumi (1996:228) distinguishes between affect and emotion in more detail:

> *Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body*

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whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is. Formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual connection or blockage, are the capture and closure of affect. Emotion is the intensest (most contracted) expression of that capture.

By adopting this conceptualisation of the relationship between affect and emotion I thus deal with emotion as flowing from affect. My emotions play a role in "the ways I know the world, the values I have, and the relationships I develop with others" (Zembylas, 2003:216). For school-going children the expression and experience of emotions are largely constructed in social relationships and value systems related to "their families, cultures and their school situations" (Zembylas, 2003:217).

For the purpose of my analysis I use affect as the driving force behind a 'chain of events' that takes place when bodies encounter each other inside of school. I understand affect as a *product* that has been created through its preceding encounters and interactions, and is collected inside of the girls' bodies. Also, affect is viewed as a continuous *process* where on-going encounters continue to influence and shape the affectivity of the girls' bodies. Importantly, because affect circulates and is transmitted between bodies and 'affects' bodies, it continues to evolve (Mulcahy, 2012). The affective embodiment of individuals shifts as they encounter emotions and the reactions of other people. This shapes the affective position of the person. Thus, affect is not static; it is always in process.

It almost goes without saying that our interactions with others will elicit emotions, and that these emotions will in turn elicit a reaction. Affect is active throughout the process of place-making and is given momentum in the actions of people. My study found that these affective and emotional expressions motivate the strategies and practices of the girls, enabling them to position themselves among their peers at their high school. Rinquest (2015) argues that students' actions inside of the school space are interwoven in a process that creates specific places, and refers to these actions as 'place-making practices'. These place-making practices "incorporate interactive social behaviors and they focus, for example, on how the students would form peer affiliations, arrange themselves in groups, and congregate in specific spaces" (Rinquest, 2015:72). I build on this argument by suggesting that students' 'place-making practices' are guided and motivated by their affectivity and emotions (see Zembylas, 2003, 2005, 2007).

I argue that during this process of affective place-making each individual constructs a unique sense of that place (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Altman & Low, 1992). Fundamentally, student-school interactions lead to the formation of a specific sense of the school environment, which leads the

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student to form specific kinds of attachments to the school. People-place relationships are described through the place attachments and identifications they make with the places they encounter. The nature and extent of the attachments that students form within their school and the extent to which they choose to identify with the school, emphasise the affective processes that are entangled in each student's school going and identity negotiations (see Fataar, 2009). The process of affective place-making thus involves the five participants' social interactions, emotional responses, the actions they take in order to position themselves among their peers, as well as their reactions to their encounters with the mental, physical and social elements of school. I argue that all these practices work together to construct the process of affective place-making to produce a unique and particular place for each individual.

3.4   Methodology

The article is based on data collected during a six-month ethnographic investigation of a group of five girls at their high school. I specifically concentrate on the girls' activities in the out-of-classroom spaces of their school, which included the playgrounds, corridors, bathrooms, sports fields and the hall. These are 'informal' spaces for the types of activities, social behaviors and identity negotiations that do not occur inside of the classroom (Tupper et al., 2008; O'Donoghue, 2007). It is within these spaces that I believe the students make place most vigorously.

An ethnographic research approach allowed me intimate access into the girls' life-worlds in their school spaces. I adopted a participant observer stance based on my immersion into the concrete, everyday worlds of these five high school girls in a quest to get as close as possible to the tangible day-to-day happenings and their feelings and actions in response to their interactions. I worked hard to achieve "shared, social and situated ways of being with participants" (Titchen & Hobson 2005:127) in order to become accepted and trusted by the girls. This was mainly achieved by adopting a willingness to participate in the activities that the students engaged in on a daily basis. In this way I shared their social situations in their out-of-classroom spaces, which allowed me to gain perspective and insight into their affective place-making processes. After four weeks of orientating and positioning ourselves amongst the students in the school, I utilised a variety of qualitative research methods to gather data relating to my research focus. In addition to my observations, I made use of focus group discussions, semi-structured individual interviews, photo-elicitation interviews with student-produced photographs, and photo-based scrapbooks. The data collected through this assemblage of instruments offered me insights into the girls' individual thoughts and feelings. The focus group discussions and my observations furthermore revealed how the girls

behaved and articulated their thoughts in the presence of the group, emphasising the collective nature of their experiences (Smithson, 2009).

One of my initial objectives was identifying a group of girls willing to participate in the study. Within the first week of my arrival five Grade 10 girls, eager and excited, volunteered as research participants. They were culturally and racially diverse, shared a common group of friends and went to most of the same classes. Emily, Ariya, Hannah, Ashley and Lulu (pseudonyms) are all from diverse domestic backgrounds and differ in terms of class, culture and race, but encountered each other at Mount Valley High and went on to establish a complex and precarious peer network. During the next five months at the school I vigorously attempted to understand the intricacies of the girls' affective positioning and interactions with each other in various out-of-class spaces in terms of which they make place at the school.

I utilised three critical incidents which occurred during my time in the field in order to exemplify various dimensions related to affective place-making. By describing and discussing these three incidents, I aim to illustrate how affect operates through the actions that the girls took, their emotions and reactions as part of their affective place-making process. The first incident deals with what I label girl-to-girl positioning, which relates to individual place-making. The second incident focuses on racialised positioning, which relates to group place-making. Finally, the third incident deals with agency and exemplifies strategic place-making. Discussing these three incidents allows me to develop an understanding of the participating girls' contribution to processes of place-making at their school.

3.5   Girl-to-girl positioning: *Individual* affective place-making

High school girls entangled in complex processes of figuring out their identities can be rude and harsh towards each other. This first incident portrays the crude way in which two of the girls went about positioning themselves through their social interactions and by acting in these ways contributed to making the school a particular kind of place. A twenty-five second conversation presented and discussed below revealed the volatile relationship at school of two of the participants, Emily and Ariya, and illustrates the potential harshness of peer-to-peer positioning.

3.5.1 Emily and Ariya

During my time in the field I observed Emily to be a cheerful and friendly person. She is a tall, athletically built white girl who enjoys participating and excelling in various sports codes. She came to Mount Valley High after struggling academically at one of the neighbouring public high schools.

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Emily's parents sought out the remedial support that the teachers and smaller class groups at this private school could offer her. Life at Mount Valley High posed difficulties for Emily as she struggled to associate with her female peers. I observed that she formed relationships more easily with the boys at school. On the other hand, a classmate, Ariya, who also transferred from the same public school to Mount Valley High, could quickly assert herself amongst her peers. Ariya is a physically small, yet cavalier, white girl with strawberry blonde hair. Ariya's family history confronted her with many challenging situations, which caused her to periodically display negative emotions such as hostility and anger. These emotional struggles manifested in her deviant behaviour in and out of school. After her father's passing she was left in the care of three of her aunts, who enrolled her at Mount Valley High as a desperate last resort to ensure that she completes her high school education.

3.5.2 Girl-to-girl incident

During a focus group discussion, I posed a question which required the girls to speak about their friends. Emily wasted no time in her response to this prompt: "Okay, me and Ariya, I knew each other in my previous high school, but we, well she didn't like me". Ariya interrupts Emily, mumbling from behind her hand: "I thought she was a slut". Upon hearing Ariya's remark the group instantly bursts out into laughter and Emily surprisingly joins in. "Putting *that* out there", comments another participant (Ashley), who is seemingly shocked at the harshness of Ariya's remark. Ashley's comment elicits more laughter from the other girls and enhances my awareness of the sarcastic undertone of this moment – something, it seems, Emily is unaware of. Emily turns to Ariya and continues with "and then I don't know what happened here", referring to when they came to Mount Valley High about a year ago. She adds: "What did happen?" Ariya responds by altering the tone and pitch of her voice and replies patronizingly: "I got to know you". Emily instantly adds: "So we're best friends, we're actually just all friends, like ja, best friends" and giggles. At this point the conversation takes a different turn with two of the other participants wanting to describe their friendship. Yet this seemingly insignificant and fleeting incident became a central way for me (the researcher) to understand how these girls were acting in order to position themselves individually among their peers.

3.5.3 Affective manifestation: Emotional responses

Following the theory, I firstly consider how each of the two girls' affectivities manifested in their emotional responses during this girl-to-girl incident. Emily is excited to offer her opinion and joyfully perseveres through her interaction with Ariya who, on the other hand, reacts defensively to Emily's account of the peer group that they established. She responds by being rude and

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condescending. Throughout the duration of the incident Emily seems focused on portraying herself as one of the popular girls through, for example, attempting to forge an alliance with Ariya, which the latter resists. Emily seems either to be blissfully unaware of, or intentionally overlooked, Ariya's true emotions in relation to their alleged friendship. During this brief interaction Emily appears mostly oblivious to Ariya's 'I-don't-care' attitude and by-the-way manner in which she quite easily makes a harsh statement: "I thought she was a slut". Both girls are responding in rather peculiar ways in this moment. One should seek to understand why both Emily and Ariya were acting and reacting in the ways they chose to at this point.

3.5.4 Action: Place-making practices and positioning

Importantly, these girls are acting in the presence of the rest of the group of girls as well as the researcher (myself). I therefore consider these responses to be directly associated with each girl's positioning amongst their peers. Emily desperately desired to be seen as one of the popular girls and presumed that in order to accomplish this she had to become part of Ariya's group of friends. What made this difficult for Emily was that she did not want to participate in some of their risqué after-school-activities because of her conservative personal values and as such struggled to get close to the group. According to the other girls and two teachers, Emily and Ariya were not the 'best friends' that Emily was making them out to be. Emily would mostly be observed sitting alone on a sidewalk chatting on her phone, or with some older boys with whom she has had long-term friendships. This incident exemplifies the emotional struggles of these teenage girls to find acceptance and belonging in order to assert their identities.

I conclude from this incident that when Ariya is harsh towards Emily, it produces her own harshness. If Ariya desires to be viewed as a dominant figure within her specific peer group known to judge and bully others, she must thus act in accordance with the culture they have established. If this group has established its dominance by being harsh and judgmental, then Ariya is acting in this way in order to position herself among her peers in a calculated manner for her to be accepted by the group. It can thus be said that Ariya's behavior is framed by the group's harsh affective culture. There are consequences of her rudeness. The ruder Ariya is in marginalising Emily, the more she affirms her own identity of rudeness which, in turn, positions her inside the school in this manner. Ariya's behavior affects Emily's behavior. At the same time Emily's behavior, in relation to Ariya's behavior, also affects Ariya.

I suggest an ongoing process of positioning and repositioning where the girls' affect (as a product) influences each other and (as something in process) continues to be influenced by the environment and thus continually evolves. Importantly, the girls' affective orientation is evolving and positioning them in specific ways, contributing to how they are creating and recreating the character of the place.

3.5.5 Reaction: Place attachments and identifications

The actions of the girls, by positioning themselves through their behavior towards others, lead to reactions, which I can observe in the form of the attachments and identifications the girls make within the school. In relation to this incident, Ariya, as one of the main members of the popular group, frequently referred to her firm attachment to this school, which is noteworthy in the light of her lack of attachment to any of her previous schools. Something is different for her at Mount Valley High. She refers to the school as a place that "feels like home". The specific expressive culture of Mount Valley High creates a space for Ariya that makes her feel accepted despite her run-ins with the authorities at her previous schools. She carves out a space with her peers that cultivates and affirms her new school identity. Although she continues to be experienced as harsh and opinionated, she has not been in a single *physical* fight and did not become a school drop-out as her family had feared. She is never absent from school and teachers confirm that her grades have improved since coming to the school.

In contrast, since joining Mount Valley High Emily has struggled to secure a firm attachment to the school. She frequently referred to her sense that it was not a 'proper school' and that her family struggles to take it seriously. Her disposition was fuelled by her difficulty to form peer connections with others in her year group and affirmed her feelings of disconnection. While Emily was detached, Ariya had successfully embedded herself in the fabric of Mount Valley High. This incident illustrates how Ariya's embeddedness co-positioned Emily's weak attachment, which in turn co-positions Ariya as more attached. In other words, the logic at play here seems to be that if you are the perpetrator of rudeness, you are positioning others because of your attitude and behavior, which in turn entrenches your position. The occurrence of this (and other similar) incidents created the school as a specific place for each of these girls.

3.5.6 Individual affective place-making

This interaction is an example of one dimension of place-making. The incident provides clues of how affect functions through the process of place-making by focusing on two individuals' interactions at Mount Valley High. I suggest that the culture of the school is established by the

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interaction of the affectivities drawn out by the person-person / people-environment interactions taking place. Being rude to Emily produces Ariya's rudeness and, as such, produces Ariya's superiority. This in turn produces Emily's lack of social attachments and tenuous search for social networks at school, which manifests in her weak attachment to the school. Ariya's behavior creates Emily's behavior, which (re)creates Ariya's behavior and as such creates the place for both of them. Emily's experiences of the school through her weaker attachments are in contradistinction to those of Ariya, who has formed positive associations and strong attachments with the school. Rudeness is the way in which Ariya attaches to the place. The specific place-making is produced by the kind of attachment that Ariya and her group of friends exemplify. Therefore, hostility and rudeness define this group of girls in this place. Marked by rudeness, this group produces an assimilative culture which attaches itself strongly to the school and simultaneously works to detach others such as Emily from this particular place.

3.6   Racialised positioning: *Group* affective place-making

In this section I present an incident that portrays the girls' affective positioning in relation to their understanding and embodiment of race. Such positioning contributes to the type of place that Mount Valley High becomes. The girls' use of racial epithets serves to categorise and position each other socially inside the school.

3.6.1 Lulu and Hannah

During another focus group discussion, I posed a question regarding the girls' use of labels in reference to themselves and others. Lulu was the first to respond. During the month prior to the focus group Lulu had presented herself as a polite and conscientious black girl. She came to Mount Valley High only three months prior to the start of my research. Lulu often expressed her longing for the familiarity of her previous high school, which was situated in her home community. Lulu had left her friends and her beloved dance classes behind when her parents decided to move her to Mount Valley High, which was a 30-minute drive from their home. They believed that attending a private school, instead of the school in their community, would offer Lulu a brighter future. Lulu did not entirely resent her new school. She was in the process of orientating herself to her new environment and as such had not formed many close friendships. The extract from the focus group below involving Lulu illustrates the coded, yet racially exclusionary, use of labelling by the girls:

Interviewer: If you could label your group of friends, what would you call them?

Lulu: I don't know…

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Hannah: The *charras*! They are the *charras!*[3]

Hannah shouts the word *charras* and upon hearing this everybody burst out into loud laughter. Everybody started talking simultaneously, which creates a somewhat chaotic moment. Importantly, Hannah seemed to enjoy provoking this response. Hannah is a talkative and energetic colored girl who labels herself as "the school newspaper and loudmouth". During break times she moves around the school buildings connecting with various groups of people, such as the cleaning staff, primary school students and students in her own class group. Regarding this incident, what is significant about Hannah is that her family is racially diverse. Her father is an older, white German native and her mother is much younger and of a mixed race, referred to as 'colored'. Additionally, Hannah's father does not live in South Africa. The only connection she has with him is the financial support he offers their family.

3.6.2 Group incident

When asked to explain the term *charras,* Hannah exclaims: "They're all the same race!". Without any hesitation Lulu responds with "What the hell Hannah!?". The discussion provided below continues,

Interviewer: You call them *charras* if they are all the same race?

Hannah: All the same race, everybody, the whole group…

(Laughter)

Ariya: They're not Indians.

Lulu: We are not *charras*, am I that dark, yoh?

Interviewer: What is a *charra*?

Ariya: Like an Indian?

Lulu: I'm not an Indian.

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[3] This article uses the pejorative apartheid-created racial categories black, colored, white and Indian (from the Indian sub-continent) in reference to South Africa's four race groups. However, using these terms makes me (the authors) uncomfortable. I hope that my analysis points to these labels as entirely socially constructed, understood in the contingent world of space, relation and other discursive processes. The term '*charras'* is a derogatory word in South Africa that refers to Indians. It is used here by Hannah somewhat inaccurately to racialize this situation.

Interviewer: I know.

Ariya: You know M? I call him a *charra*.

(Laughter and shouting)

Hannah: When they speak to me at the shop, I'm like 'excuse me, excuse me', I don't know *what* they say.

Ariya: I'm just like: 'Is it? Really? You don't say'. And they work at 20 different shops and they are like everywhere.

Lulu: … I think like the bell rang…

Ashley: Now what would you label yourself?

Lulu: I don't know!

Ashley: They're so smart, the whole group, they're the smarty pants. So I call them Smarties.

Hannah: I know I know!

Lulu: Shut up!

Emily: I would call my group the crazy people or the weird people.

Ariya: The crew.

Emily: The squad.

Lulu: The talk-a-lots.

Hannah: Hey, we're the 'skinnerbekkies' (gossipers).

Lulu: Yes! The gossip girls!

3.6.3 Affective manifestation: Emotional responses

This incident displays how groups make place at the school through their use of race as an organiser of relations. This was an emotionally charged incident that led to racialised positioning and what seems like Lulu being marginalised. Here we have a student (Lulu) who is in the process of orientating herself to the school being confronted by another student who has attended the school

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for years (Hannah). Lulu's response to this incident is emotionally loaded, yet demonstrates her capacity to be self-controlled. Lulu's emotional response is informed by her affective positioning as a new black girl at school. She was offended by Hannah's comments, yet she chooses to respond with restraint, refusing to resort to the racist behavior being meted out to her. Hannah acts in order to gain leverage over Lulu, but does so strategically and in the light of making a joke and having fun at Lulu's expense.

3.6.4 Action: Place-making practices and positioning

The positioning in this incident occurs through the discursive practices of these students. By calling the black girls *charras* Hannah's behavior cannot immediately be labelled as racist because she did not use an accurate racist epithet[4] to refer to Lulu. The girls' use of racial language, while indirect, is simultaneously highly racialised. Lulu is being racialised, when Hannah calls her a *charra*. By doing this Hannah is actually saying that Lulu (and her group of friends) are black. Because Lulu choose not to react in a rude manner and prides herself in her strong morals and values, she responds with other, equally strategic labels, which, while not harsh, communicates to the others that she will not stand for this type of discrimination.

This incident portrays racialised behavior through the strategic and calculated use of language and words to label people racially. The girls use these racist terms in order to position and organise themselves socially on the school terrain. By making fun of the fact that Lulu prefers to sit with her black friends, Hannah is highlighting the point that at Mount Valley High it is not the norm to organise yourselves in a single-race group. This is Hannah's moment of assertion. She uses racist labels strategically in order to assert herself. Despite Hannah's desire, she is not seen as one of the girls in Ariya's popular in-group. Her struggle to fit into this group, and thus gain affirmation, informs her racist behavior towards a group (Lulu and her black friends) which she deems lesser than herself.

3.6.5 Reaction: Place attachments and identifications

Similar to the first incident, the actions of the girls led to reactions that have consequences for the ways in which they form their associations at the school. They attach to the school along a continuum of firmly attached on the one end to unattached on the other. This is done in the light of the expressive culture of the school that encourages the students to express and assert themselves.

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[4] The correct epithet would have been the highly derogatory word 'kaffir', which has historically been used to refer to black Africans in racist manner.

In this incident, as in the first incident, it becomes clear that the school's expressive culture profits some more than others. The first incident highlights how the girls who assert themselves through being rude and explicit become dominant amongst their peers. Hannah calls Lulu a *charra* and laughs about it. By doing this she asserts her dominance in two ways: she asserts herself in a racialised way and in so doing emphasises her belonging in the school. She is simultaneously emphasising that Lulu does not belong at Mount Valley High as much as she does on the basis merely that Lulu chooses to associate only with students of her own race at the school.

The type of racialisation is not blatantly crude because it does not use openly racist terms, but it works indirectly through the use of inference through labelling. Lulu's strategic response is an attempt at self-preservation and minimising attention to her own marginality as a new black girl. Lulu seeks attachment in a calculated way to retain her dignity in a school space that does not yet 'speak' to her, whereas Hannah is reproducing her own strong attachment to the school, through her racist behavior, which in turn serves to emphasise and co-produce Lulu's weak attachment to the school.

Both of these girls are affectively positioned. Hannah is affectively positioned by her own racially deprecating behavior towards Lulu. It can thus be said that her embodiment produces an emotional action and reaction that in turn reproduce her strong racialised attachment to the school. Lulu's body receives and reproduces Hannah's racism in the light of the black body's inferior positioning in the school. However, Lulu's choice to respond without open recrimination is based on her sense of survival and pride, which positions her as straddling the line between being strategic and being principled. She takes the moral high ground by not calling Hannah racist or colored. By dealing with the confrontation in this way, she retains control over the production of her 'goodness' at the margins of the school.

3.6.6 Group affective place-making

The reactions to this moment are complex. They show how the specific expressive culture of the school works in order to establish a deracialised space. However, through the school's encouragement of the students to express themselves in its spaces, the students go on to inhabit and create the school as a place in unanticipated ways. In Mount Valley High's case, where the principal imagined a democratic and inclusive space, the girls, as actors, through their acting racialise the school space (Dolby, 2001). When considering the type of place that is made as a result of such racially based incidents, Zembylas (2015) reminds me that affect should be central to my considerations in order to understand the processes involved. Zembylas (2015) states that "the

notion of racism as affective technology is the production of the effect of likeness and unlikeness, inclusion and exclusion, as affect positions that are assumed to belong to the bodies of 'us' and 'them', respectively" (Zembylas, 2015:153). Racialisation serves to position students in relation to their belonging at this particular school. Despite its official culture of inclusivity Mount Valley High becomes re-racialised via the behaviour of its students inside its school spaces.

3.7   Agency: *Strategic* affective place-making

The third incident reveals how individuals can assert themselves by mobilising the available structures at the schools. By asserting her strong agency, one of the girls positions herself, her peers as well as the principal. This agentic view "assumes that beings are self-sufficient entities … characterized by [their] capacity to reason" (Lacroix, 2013:8). Reasoning and assertion of opinion become integral to the way that individuals can utilize what the school offers, amidst challenging social conditions, in order to achieve power strategically. I emphasise strategic place-making in this section: a careful consideration of the environment by one girl and her strategic utilisation and mobilisation of the available structures in order to influence how the school as 'place' functions. In this incident Ashley portrays her powerful agency by taking strategic action against the 'popular' group of girls in an incident where they are called into the principal's office.

3.7.1 Ashley

Ashley is a sociable, confident and assertive colored girl. After her mother and father divorced, she and her mother moved from Cape Town to Pretoria, where she attended various schools before coming back to Cape Town. On returning to Cape Town, Ashley's mother searched for a good affordable school for her daughter. Ashley tells me that she enjoyed moving from school to school as this mobility offered her opportunities to "reinvent" herself and "experiment" with her identity. Ashley now attends Mount Valley High, but expresses her frustrations with some of the students at the school. Her current boyfriend has been friends with the 'popular' group of girls at school for a long time and wishes that Ashley will befriend them. The problem is that Ashley does not like the types of activities that these girls engage in and despises the way in which they treat each other. With little desire to associate with these girls, Ashley feels strongly about her individuality and states that "I don't limit myself to people". As an assertive young woman, Ashley's agency offers me a way of describing how people go about making place *strategically*.

3.7.2 Strategic incident

In this incident Ashley decides to utilise the structures available to her at school in order to position herself at the school. During a social encounter at break time Emily overhears how the group of

popular girls are slandering Ashley behind her back. They call her 'stirvy', which refers to someone with a superior self-image. Upset by the behaviour of the group, Emily decides to inform Ashley about what was said. Their actions also upset Ashley, who decides to move strategically. According to Ashley, "there were mean things being said about me and I could handle it if it was said to my face, cause then I know, but soon as its behind my back and stuff, then it's like how do I defend myself?" She chooses not to confront the group of girls directly, instead opting to turn towards the authorities at the school. She acts by mobilising the open-door policy of the principal and exposes the girls' "meanness". According to the culture that the principal herself has been promoting, students should speak up, they should be heard and the staff should be available to facilitate conflict management. The principal has to act on these allegations, because of the place that she is trying to create. Ashley is well aware of the ideals that the principal has been promoting and she now moves to hold her to them.

3.7.3 Agency and affect: strategic positioning and attachments

What sets Ashley apart from the other girls is that she does not wish to be accepted by this 'popular' group of girls. She dislikes their ways of behaving and does not want to be associated with them. Ashley states that: "I got to a point where I was like if you are not going to accept me for who I am, then that's your problem, because I'm not going change for you. And that's my attitude towards them". She admitted feeling sad and hurt by the group's slander, but these emotions were quickly replaced by anger and disgust. Significantly, it was her capacity to reason, her maturity, and that she knew who she was and wanted to be – in other words, her affectivity – that motivated her response. In her own words: "I think it's basically because of my confidence… they break each other down so much they don't even know who they are anymore".

By acting strategically and not giving in to the pressure of this group, Ashley bravely positions herself among her peers. She cleverly asserts her dominance over the 'popular' group. The rudeness of the girls that I have illustrated not only through this incident, but the previous two incidents, now blew up in their faces. Ashley can therefore be regarded as a proxy for the girls who are weakly attached to the school. She is assertive, but weakly positioned. However, because of her assertiveness, she strategically uses the space to gain power over the 'powerful'.

3.7.4 Strategic affective place-making

Ashley very strategically positioned the principal in the incident to gain conversational leverage over her peers and the principal becomes integral to the specific place-making process. Ashley is acutely aware of what the school's discourse is and knows that the principal must respond in a

particular way because the school's expressive culture forces her to respond in this way. Therefore, Ashley is strategically responding to the discourse the principle has established. This emphasises how one can make the place work for oneself when approaching it strategically. Ashley's agency, I suggest, is an example of strategic place-making. She turns the school into a specific place for asserting her agency and dealing with conflict. This has a snowball effect and puts into action a new way of dealing with conflict. After this incident, students were required to deal with their problems by making an appointment with the principal and discussing them in her presence. The principal acts as the mediator in peer-to-peer conflict situations. She has established an expressive culture that aims to cultivate mature relationships and teach students good ways of managing conflict. Mount Valley High becomes a place then where the students invoke their own agency by making the school's structures and discourses work for them as part of their own positioning practices.

3.8   Conclusion

This article has focused on the place-making practices of selected school girls at one private school in the Cape Town. It placed the affective bodies of five girls at the center of an investigation into their place-making in the light of the inclusive expressive culture of this high school. I labelled these practices 'affective place-making', in other words, a process whereby people act and attach meaning to a space and thereby turn it into a place (Ellis, 2005). Theories of affect took center stage in this analysis; places are viewed as bearers of affect, which gives rise to emotions, action and reactions, leading to affectivities that co-constitute the discursive environment as well as the practices that emerge in everyday contingent circumstances in the different spaces of the school, where bodies collide, engage and establish place-based attachments.

The article went on to present three distinct incidents, drawn from my ethnographic work, to portray the complex constitutive processes involved in such place-making. The first girl-to-girl incident illustrated how the girls position themselves individually among their peers. This incident exemplifies the complexities of the ways that these high school girls interact and negotiate their peer affiliations and establish peer networks. Self-assertion and expression, encouraged by the school, work to organise the girls' responses in this moment. The dominant group of girls has established a culture that includes and excludes. It strongly attaches the girls who are assertive – and in this case, rude and rebellious – to the school, and thereby distances those who are less assertive. In the second incident race is a function of positioning, a way in which the students organise and categorise each other into groups against the backdrop of a seemingly deracialised school environment. What they choose to do is to categorise each other in terms of race and as such go on to re-racialise the space. This incident shows how both the students and the place are

repositioned. The third incident reveals how one girl asserts her agency by mobilizing the available structures and discourses of the school. Ashley strategically made the school a particular place by carefully considering the environment and strategically utilising the available structures to promote her position. She consequently produced her own place-making and place identity, which strengthened her position amongst her peers.

I argue that the place of school is made by those who move through it in unique ways. Each body's affective disposition comes into play when multiple bodies collide inside the school. The collision of affects has a way of organising and positioning the girls inside of the spaces and consequently makes the school something other than what it was before they encountered it. By focusing on the out-of-classroom spaces of the school, I have shown how the girls make place almost out of sight of the school's authorities, yet markedly impacting on the type of place that Mount Valley High becomes. In the first two incidents we saw how rudeness was central to organising the school space for the girls individually and in groups, creating a particularly offensive expressive culture. It is in these 'out-of-sight' spaces that teenage girls (and boys) are emoting, acting, negotiating and strategising in order to establish their emerging identities. Importantly, the culture of the school opens up the space for these girls to act and their acting at school transforms the place. The school attempts to be an inclusive space that accommodates diversity, but the girls' affectivities, their bodies and their embodied dispositions, co-constitute the school as a specific type of place. They interpret the culture of the school and act in response to its discourses and their own affects and consequent ways of 'living' there. They recreate the place through a combination of individual, group and strategic place-making practices, turning it into a particular place. It is thus clear that the character of the school as a place is constantly lived, experienced and reordered by those who move through it.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

4.1   Rationale

This study explored the navigation and negotiation of youth identities within school spaces. The study privileged a link between space and identity which provided a conceptual platform enabling me to construct an investigation into the way that high school girls go about their place-making within their school environment. The investigation focused on understanding how practices of place-making influenced the identities of the students involved as well as the formation and transformation of the place, their high school. The school as a particular place is viewed as integral to each of its students' lives, a place where they spend much of their day, and which, as such, profoundly influences its students' identities. This investigation, however, focused primarily on understanding the nature and the extent of the way that students' place-based identifications are formed.

Studying this phenomenon requires careful consideration of context. Although the specific school context and expressive culture of the school are fundamentally significant to my findings, it is important to acknowledge the broader context of post-apartheid South Africa, which Fataar describes as a complex reconfiguring terrain that provides the text and background music for emergent identity practices (2010:44), it influences how youths go about positioning and evaluating themselves politically, socially and racially (Vandeyar, 2008). These 'newer' school spaces create particular contexts that situate their inhabitants in particular ways and influence their negotiation of their place identities (Proshansky, 1983). The school in my study, Mount Valley High (pseudonym), is representative of these newer school spaces. Mount Valley High's school management believes in promoting, accommodating and integrating its diverse student population into its carefully considered and calibrated socially inclusive institutional culture.

I chose to do my research for this thesis outside of the formal classroom, instead selecting the informal spaces of the school, because this is where I believed students, away from the corrective gaze of figures of authority, 'make place' by acting in spaces they can call their own. High school girls constantly engage in complex interactions in the various out-of-classroom spaces of their school. They actively participate in making the school a distinctive place for them through processes which shape and reorganise the school's spaces that they move through and occupy. My study set out to understand this phenomenon by focusing on the experiences of five of its Grade 10 female student inhabitants. I sought to understand, first, how the school spaces are created and,

more specifically, to what extent these spaces are influenced and transformed by the students; secondly, I investigated how the place that is created helps to influence the identities of its student inhabitants.

This study was guided by a main research question and three sub-questions.

The main research question asks: To what extent do high school girls 'make place' while negotiating their place-based identities in the informal spaces of their independent high school?

In addition to the main research question, this study offers a response the following three sub-questions:

I. How do the physical and social resources of the place influence the high school girls' place dependence?

II. What place-making practices do the high school girls engage in inside of informal school spaces?

III. What is the nature and the extent of the identifications that the high school girls make in relation to their school?

4.2   Theoretical framework

The study's theoretical orientation is based on the view that schools, as socialising institutions where diverse groups of adolescents come to spend much of their day, would provide me with a significant site to investigate the phenomenon of place-making and place-based identifications. The theoretical framework is founded on a combination of Lefebvre's theory (1971/1991) on the production of space, which includes the interaction of the physical, social and mental dimensions of space, on the one hand, and the theorisation of the formation of place-identities by Proshansky et al. (1983). The theories, as well as the work of other researchers and theorists such as Nespor (1994, 1997), Massey (1991, 1994, 1995), Tupper et al. (2008), O'Donoghue (2007) and Marcouyeux and Fleury-Bahi (2011), have contributed to my own theorisation of place-making and place identities. My fieldwork and findings have led me to further investigate theories that could provide me with a lens and a language through which to understand my research data, offering the study additional theoretical flesh. These theories include notions of human affect and emotion as formulated by Zembylas (2003, 2005, 2007, 2015) and Massumi (1995, 1996) as well as ways to describe and categorise place identifications, such as offered by Nespor's (1997) work and Breakwell's (1986, 1992, 1993) theories of place attachment.

In Chapter Two of this study Lefebvre's (1991/1971) theory of the production of space offered me a lens through which I was able to consider the everyday school-based lives of the participating high school girls. Lefebvre's theory focuses on the simultaneous interaction of the mental, physical and social aspects (the spatial triad) that come together in specific spaces. Drawing on Lefebvre's (1971/1991) spatial theory, I understand school space as a coming together of all the various facets of the school environment and suggest that a 'place' is a particular articulation of the interaction of the various spatial dimensions (Massey, 1994). A 'place' is therefore not a fixed, static and stable entity with a fixed meaning. Each individual identifies with various aspects of school space, connects emotions to experiences in the various spatial dimensions, and derives meaning from what she perceives this place to be. Thus, the experiences of individuals, in specific moments in place, are multiple, varied and dependent on how the individual is situated inside of, or in relation to, the flows and frictions that co-construct place (Massey, 1994).

I argue that physical resources influence people's behaviour in place and as such consider the way that the physical dimension of space interacts with or enables social interaction and relations. The physical school setting provides students with access to resources, which stimulates the types of activities that can occur and which activities will not be possible at that specific physical setting (Tucker & Matthews, 2001; O'Donoghue, 2007). The social processes connected to 'making place' entail activities which I refer to as 'place-making practices'. These place-making practices incorporate interactive social behaviours and they focus, for example, on how the students would form peer-affiliations, arrange themselves in groups, and congregate in and claim specific spaces. I suggest that people attach meaning to, and identify with, a place whilst engaged in these complex individual and communal interactions to achieve a making of place (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011; O'Donoghue, 2007). People are therefore constructors of place where place-making is a consequence of their everyday interactions within a complexity of networks and intersections in their lived school spaces (Nespor, 1997).

In order to aid my analysis of the selected girls' relations and interactions within the various school spaces and how these spaces shape their identities, I utilised three categories adapted from Nespor's (1997) ethnographic study on children's movements through their neighbourhood spaces. Nespor (1997) found that children interact with space in different ways and understanding these requires a historical, in addition to a spatial, gaze (p. 94). Nespor describes the children that he studied with the aid of three spatially inscribed patterns of interaction, namely 'embeddedness', 'displacement' and 'mobility'. 'Embeddedness' or 'emplacement' refers to people being rooted in familiar spaces. 'Displacement' suggests that the person is in some way disconnected from comfortable space.

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'Mobility' refers to being mobile in the sense that the person's movement creates a category that neither inhibits the individual from forming meaningful attachments to a place nor creates the idea that the individual is displaced from familiar space, but the movement itself allows for its own analysis of behaviour (Nespor 1997). These three categories provide me with three distinct analytical lenses that allow me to analyse the place identifications and place-based identity projections of the high school girls in this study.

In Chapter Two (article one) I offered an interpretation of the 'embedded' place-identifications of two of the participating girls to show how these closely connected students went about 'making place'. Chapter Three (article two) takes the theory and analysis a step further by considering each of the selected girls individually, their place-making and their varied identifications with the school. This chapter expanded on the theory of place-making by emphasising the concept of affect as a decisive dimension involved in this process (see Zembylas, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2015). Applying theories of affect offered me the conceptual purchase to analyse what I found while in the field. The notion 'affective place-making' provided greater depth in the analysis by showing how the girls' affect works through their bodies into their emotions, flows out as actions and reactions, and impacts not only on the people involved, but on the place and, as such, *makes* the place.

The concept of affect is viewed as the driving force behind a 'chain of events' that takes place when bodies encounter each other inside the school. I understand affect as a product that has been created through its preceding encounters and interactions, and is accumulated within the girls' bodies. Also, affect is viewed as a continuous process where on-going encounters continue to influence and shape the affectivity of the girls' bodies. Importantly, because affect circulates and is transmitted between bodies and 'affects' bodies, it continues to evolve (Mulcahy, 2012). The affective embodiment of individuals shifts as they encounter emotions and the reactions of other people, which in turn shapes the affective position of the person. Thus, affect is not static; it is always in process.

In Chapter Two (article one) I suggested that two of the selected students' actions inside of the various dimensions of school spaces are interwoven in a process that creates a specific place and in Chapter Three (article two) I build on this argument by suggesting that the girls' 'place-making' is guided and motivated by their affectivity and emotions. I argue that during this process of affective place-making each individual constructs a unique sense of that place and of their individual identities in relation to that place (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Altman & Low, 1992).

4.3   Methodology

My thesis is based on a qualitative methodological approach, which shares its philosophical foundation with the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm supports the view that there are many truths and multiple realities. This paradigm is associated with methodological approaches that provide an opportunity for the voice, experiences and practices of the research participants to be heard. It is the interpretive methodology's view that "knowledge and meaningful reality are constructed in and out of interaction between humans and their world and are developed and transmitted in a social context" (Scotland, 2012:11). Such a perspective enabled me to develop an understanding of a specific social phenomenon from the individual students' perspective, by investigating personal experience, interaction among individuals, as well as considering their historical and cultural contexts (Scotland, 2012).

I employed an ethnographic research approach which involved deliberately positioning myself within the daily school world of the student participants. I specifically utilised a critical ethnography, which "seeks to understand the relationship of culture to social structures that largely escapes the awareness of actors while influencing how they act" (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002:689). When doing critical ethnographic research, up-close and personal observations and experiences are key to the successful gathering of rich qualitative data. A person- and location-centred orientation to data collection, such as the critical ethnographic approach, enabled me to observe and understand the various dimensions of my research. My immersion into the concrete school lives of my participants for six months not only provided me with access to the daily textures of the school environment, but also with an opportunity to become an 'insider' in the daily experiences of the students at Mount Valley High.

I utilised five data-collection methods for this study: (1) participant observations, which are valuable because "implicit features in social life are more likely to be revealed as a result of the observer's continued presence and because of the observer's ability to observe behaviour rather than just rely on what is said" (Bryman, 2001:328); (2) unstructured and semi-structured interviews, which formed an integral part of my ethnographic research, as they enabled me to generate insights into the interviewees' point of view; (3) focus group discussions, which encouraged the participants to develop and articulate their thoughts and enabled them "to develop ideas collectively, bringing forward their own priorities and perspectives" (Smithson, 2009:359); (4) photo-elicitation interviews utilising student produced photographs, which were used as a stimulus during the interview in order to "trigger responses and memories and unveil participants' attitudes, views, beliefs, and meanings" (Meo, 2010:150). Some advantages of photo-elicitation interviewing

include: promoting rapport; enabling researchers to grasp young people's viewpoints and social worlds; triggering richer conversations; and bridging distant social and cultural worlds of the researcher and research subject (Meo, 2010); (5) Photo diaries were a final addition to my data-collection methods. Participants used a selection of their photographs of school spaces and attached their reflective thoughts regarding their school spaces and activities that took place with a focus on their emotional responses to these events. These served as thought-generating stimuli for reflection on their actions inside of the informal spaces of school.

The utilisation of a qualitative, ethnographic research approach and employment of the described data-collection methods that generated the findings have directed and informed my understanding of how high school girls 'make place' while negotiating their place-based identities in the informal spaces of their school.

4.4   Analytical summary

In this section I present an analytical summary of my main research findings. I present these findings described in Chapters Two and Three consecutively in order to build towards my main argument.

In Chapter Two, also the first article, I illustrate how two high school girls turn school space into place by actively engaging in the socio-spatial dynamics of their school-going lives in the informal spaces outside their classrooms. My main findings show how the dimensions of space work and are reworked by those who inhabit it in order to create a particular place, while simultaneously negotiating their specific place-based identities.

The interaction between the physical, social and mental dimensions of space lay the conceptual foundation for understanding how these girls turn space into place at their high school. Student-produced photographs and photo-elicitation interviews generated findings that show how the two girls I concentrate on went about occupying and utilising the available physical and social resources of their school. The girls clearly utilised school spaces and resources away from the gaze of teachers and other adults in personal, needs-driven and diverse ways. The need to acquire social status and power amongst peers were evident elements that guided the social behaviours of the two girls. This was done either through the one girl asserting a harsh localised dominance that conveyed a social position of power through creating the idea of belonging to the niche 'cool' peer group, or, as shown by the other girl, by adopting strategic place-based practices that allowed her to establish a broad peer network. While the first girl remained relatively 'present' in one space, the second girl was a networker, which allowed her ensure social contact with those whom she deemed important.

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Both girls demonstrated that social acceptance and assertion can be accomplished in various ways at school. They each found unique ways of constructing and maintaining peer networks that led them to become embedded in the school, each in their distinct ways, driven by their personal needs. Their socio-spatial practices enabled them to form a particular type of attachment to the school, which I believe led to the expression of their strong place-based identifications. Their 'feeling at home', or desire for acceptance and belonging, for security and the creation of self-worth and value are all examples of the outcomes of the way that they have interpreted their experiences of the physical and social aspects at school and have consequently constructed mental images of the place that they define Mount Valley High to be.

The girls' effective socio-spatial practices led them to become 'embedded' in the fabric of the school (Nespor, 1997). They expressed feelings of belonging, acceptance and security, which contributed to an increase in their self-worth and enhancing their self-image, which in turn led to positive representations of themselves in relation to school (see Breakwell, 1986, 1992, 1993). Positive place-based identifications seemed partially to be a consequence of the interaction between their personal histories connected to their domestic lifeworlds and previous schooling experiences entangled with the behaviours that the expressive culture of the school allowed for. The school became a place that was instrumental in responding to their personal needs for belonging and acceptance, and as such offered respite from the social void they experienced in their domestic environments. Evidently, even though both girls formed positive attachments with the school, they did so in diverse ways, illustrating how place-making is an individualised process, unique for every person.

I argued that the act of successfully claiming ownership of their school spaces ensured their sense of belonging in that space and therefore they could utilise it in whichever way they chose in order to express and negotiate their identities individually as well as communally. Instead of feeling disconnected and merely passing through space, it was possible for them to connect to the material and social spaces of school at a deeper level through imagining school as a place that feels like home. And in so doing, these girls allowed the school spaces to influence their personal identifications and as such extended and transformed them (Nespor, 1997).

In Chapter Three, the second article, my aim was to extend the analysis in Chapter Two by focusing more intently on the emotional dimension of the selected girls' school-based lives. This led me to concentrate the analysis in the article on the girls' affectivities as a function of their place-making. Chapter Three thus emphasises the complexity of the high school girls' bodies and affects, and their entanglement in their school going. I focused on the affective, emotional and interactional

dimensions that constituted the five high school girls' interactions in the out-of-classroom spaces of their school. The three critical incidents that I selected to illustrate these dimensions allowed me to advance an argument about the link between affect and place-making in the light of the school's expressive culture. I argued that the participating girls interpreted the culture of their school and acted in response to its discourses by utilising a combination of individual, group and strategic *affective* place-making practices, turning the school into a particular place.

My contention was that the place-making process started with each girl's affective positioning, which is embedded in a fusion of her history, family, culture, language, race, as well as her previous experiences with schooling. I argued that each girl's affect was enacted through emotional responses to particular social encounters, which in turn elicited actions and reactions. The ways in which each girl chose to act and react in such encounters in turn guided the formation of her place identifications and attachments at school.

Firstly, the high school girls acted individually at school by positioning themselves in relation to their peers. I found that when one girl was harsh towards another less dominant peer, this approach not only produced her harshness and dominance and superior positioning, but simultaneously produced the other's lesser status. The harsh girl was acting in this manner as a response to the culture established by the dominant peer group. Marked by rudeness, this group produced an assimilative culture which attached itself strongly to the school and simultaneously worked to detach others from this particular place. This culture strongly attached the girls who were assertive – and in this case, rude and rebellious – to the school, and thereby served to distance and alienate those who were less assertive.

Secondly, the participating girls positioned themselves at school through the establishment of groups. One such incident portrayed the girls' affective positioning in relation to their understanding and embodiment of race. This incident displayed how groups gave 'meaning' to the school through their use of race as an organiser of relations. Racialised behaviour was transmitted by some of the girls through the strategic and calculated use of language and labels in order to position and organise themselves socially on the school terrain. One of the most startling things that I came to realise during my research was that race at the school had become a function of social positioning which informed the ways in which the students organised and categorised each other into groups against the backdrop of a seemingly deracialised school environment. Despite its official culture of inclusivity, Mount Valley High became re-racialised through the behaviour of its students inside its school spaces (see also Dolby, 2001). This incident shows how both the students and the place were repositioned by the racialised place-making practices of the girls.

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Thirdly, the students asserted themselves individually by mobilising the available structures at the school. I label this as strategic place-making, which I understand to be a careful consideration of the environment and the subsequent strategic utilisation and mobilisation of the available structures in order to influence how the school functions as 'place'. Through this process of making place a confident and assertive, yet weakly positioned girl, could through her assertiveness and strategic use of space gain power over those whom deemed themselves as the 'powerful'. This emphasised how one can make the place work for oneself when approaching it strategically. Mount Valley High became a place where students invoked their own agency by making the school's structures and discourses work for them as part of their own positioning practices.

In both Chapters Two and Three I argued that the place of school is made by those who move through it in unique ways. However, in Chapter Three I specifically focus on how the girls' affective disposition come into play when their bodies collide with others' inside their school. The collision of affects has a way of organising and positioning the girls inside of the spaces and consequently makes the school something other than what it was before the collision. I suggest that ongoing processes of positioning and repositioning where the girls' affect, *as product*, influences each other and as something *in process* continues to be influenced by the environment and thus continually evolves. Importantly, the girls' affective orientation was evolving and positioning them in specific ways, contributing to how they were creating and recreating the character of the place. The culture of the school was therefore co-established by the interaction of the affectivities drawn out by the person-person / people-environment interactions taking place.

This analytical summary has presented the conceptual conclusions of my research as advanced in Chapters Two and Three. This section served as a response to the three sub-questions of my study. I explained how high school girls utilised their school's physical and social resources in order to sustain their sense of belonging as depicted through their place dependence. The girls' various place-making practices were conceptualised in terms of their individual, group and strategic interactions in their school spaces. Finally, the nature and extent of the girls' place identifications and attachments were conceptualised as the outcome of their affectivities, guided by their need to belong the at school.

4.5   Analytical conclusion: The main argument

In response to the main research question guiding the study: "To what extent do high school girls 'make place' while negotiating their place-based identities in the informal spaces of their independent high school?" I now summarise my main argument.

I offer the following explanation that cuts across all the conceptual categories explained in the analytical summary and that focused on *the extent* of the girls' place-making. I highlight the existence of the school and the child prior to their encountering each other and then emphasise their consequent interactions, which I believe explain the place identifications of the students and influence their place-making. The school exists and expresses a unique culture which is experienced and interpreted by each of its students. Each individual student exists and encompasses an embodied student identity, which has been constructed through previous interactions with schooling and is in addition influenced by domestic socialisations. When the the school's expressive culture meets and interacts with the students a relationship emerges and a bond is established. The students go about shaping their attachments to the school on a continuum between embedded and detached, a process which I argue is informed by their need to belong, a need which my research showed was not satisfied in other the spaces of their lifeworlds. Consequently, a specific identity is forged and a particular place is made in an ongoing making of place. Nothing and nobody stands still; they are always in the process of becoming.

Mount Valley High's positioning in a peri-urban suburb of Cape Town on a farm-like setting with many plant-rich outdoor spaces and scattered classroom structures provided a favourable setting for cultivating its open and relaxed expressive culture. The school exhibited a highly inclusive expressive culture, which was evident in its daily operations. I believe this culture was a consequence of the school's emphasis on an open and relaxed school ethos, its flexible physical arrangements, the availability of supportive resources, and the relaxed and congenial relationships. The school actively went about attracting and integrating children who found this openness and diversity appealing and accommodating of their individual needs. The school became a space for academic second chances. Some students were attracted by the availability of remedial support, others enrolled because of their dismissal from surrounding public schools, mostly as a result of behavioural infractions at these schools. Some came because of the attractive physical environment, affordable fees, and the relaxed and open attitude. The school's particular expressive culture attracted and situated each of the participating girls uniquely in its environs. The five participating girls' schooling experiences prior to coming to Mount Valley High, aspects of their domestic familial lives and reasons for choosing this school are all be considered as formative factors that played a role in constructed the students' backgrounds, which were always present in some way in their school-going identifications and place-making practices. I suggest that the extent of the girls' assimilation into the school culture were dependent on 'who' these students were prior to attending the school, 'where' they came from, and 'how' they went about establishing their identifications.

As I have described in Chapters Two and Three, these girls went about making place in ways that stretched across the three spatial dimensions (physical, social and mental) and they went about this in individual, communal and strategic ways guided by their affective positions in response to the affectivity of the place. Through the school's encouragement of the students to express themselves in its spaces, the students went on to inhabit and create the school as a place in unanticipated ways. In the school's 'out-of-sight' spaces the girls were emoting, acting, negotiating and strategising in order to establish their emerging identities. Importantly, the culture of the school opened up the space for these girls to act and their acting at school was instrumental in reorganising and transforming the place for them. The school attempted to be an inclusive space that accommodates diversity, but the girls' affectivities, their bodies and their embodied dispositions co-constituted the school as a specific type of place. They interpreted the culture of the school and acted in response to its discourses and their desires to belong, and consequently constructed ways of 'living' there. It became clear that the character of the school as a place was constantly lived, experienced and reordered by those who moved through it.

My findings show that once the girls orientated themselves to the school's culture, their ways of acting at school were informed by the nature of their place identifications and the extent of their attachments to the school. The girls all conveyed a need to belong, desiring to be accepted by one or more of their peers at school and wanting to belong *at* school. The girls who aligned themselves with peers who identified closely with the culture of the school found a sense of belonging not only amongst their chosen peers, but the school and its affectivities. The inclusive, supportive and relatively non-judgmental expressive culture of the school allowed some of the participants to express their own uniqueness and opened up spaces for them to test other experimental identities. Some of the girls identified with the expressive culture of the school because this enabled them to make more distinct or unique place identifications. The school's inclusive culture suggested a distinctive "lifestyle" to which some of the girls could connect to strongly. In contradistinction to such identification, other girls experienced feelings of shame and embarrassment. These girls often expressed their desire to go to a 'normal' school in order not to be frowned upon by their peers from the surrounding public schools. Instead of using their placement as a form of self-identification, they preferred to present themselves as distinct or apart from this school. Both of these groups of girls seemed to "use a place-related self-referent in order to present themselves as distinct from others" (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996: 207).

The girls' place identifications were also subject to how their experiences at school influenced their self-esteem. Some girls used the place of school to create a sense of worth and social value

(Korpela, 1989) that propelled them outside of their domestic life worlds into a world where they could reimagine themselves, repositioning themselves through the place identifications that they established at school. The qualities of the place in essence enabled these girls to boost their self-esteem (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell 1996). Conversely, some girls' responses to the school illustrated the undesirable effects that the place had on their self-esteem. When a student could not establish a place of belonging at school, feelings of isolation and rejection caused negative self-esteem associations and served to detach the girls from the school. The nature of the girls' place identifications better explains the extent to which they went to form their attachments to the school. And additionally, the extent of the girls' attachments and detachments to the school became instrumental in understanding the place-making process.

These high school girls connected to the school along a continuum of 'firmly attached' on the one end to 'unattached' or 'detached' on the other. It became clear that the school's expressive culture benefited some students more than others. The more assertive girls became dominant amongst their peers. Fundamentally, their student-school interactions led to the formation of a specific sense of the school environment, which in turn led the students to form specific kinds of attachments to the school.

In conclusion, I offer the metaphor 'finding a place to belong' as an attempt to capture the nature of the place-making of these high school girls. I believe that the desire to belong operated as a backdrop to the acting of the girls in the informal spaces of their school and this consequently assisted me in gauging the *extent* to which they make place. I believe that the assimilative culture of the school provided them with a platform and text to exercise their place making. The girls utilised the culture of the school, claimed spaces outside of their classrooms and shaped these spaces through their practices in them. They transformed these spaces into a place. I argue that the extent of their place-making depended on the level of their assertiveness, and the assertiveness of their place-making depended on the extent to which they felt the need to belong, which is a desire that they attempted to fulfil in the spaces of their school.

It is thus clear that places such as schools should therefore be viewed as bearers of affect, which give rise to emotions, action and reactions, leading to affectivities that co-constitute their discursive environment as well as the practices that emerge in everyday contingent circumstances in the different spaces of the school. Schools are places where bodies collide, engage and establish identifications. I understand the making of a place as a process that occurs through the complex interactions of all its inhabitants, but that the construction and interpretation of that place rests with each individual. Place is therefore in the eye of the beholder. In other words, I argue that the school

became a personal and individualised place for each girl involved in this study. Ultimately, what became apparent was that the girls were thinking all the time, that their interactions at school were entangled in practices of negotiating the process of becoming young adults, thereby finding and making their place in the world.

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Appendix A: Ethics clearance letter from Stellenbosch University

25-Mar-2015

Rinquest, Elzahn E

Approval Notice   Response to Modifications- (New Application)

Proposal #: HS1174/2015 Title: 'Place making': Investigating the place-based identity negotiations of high school girls in the informal spaces of their school.

Dear Miss Elzahn Rinquest,

Your **Response to Modifications - *(New Application)*** received on **18-Mar-2015**, was reviewed by members of the **Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)** via Expedited review procedures on **24-Mar-2015** and was approved. Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **24-Mar-2015 -23-Mar-2016**

General comments:

The REC commends the researcher for her thoughtful response and appropriate changes to the research proposal.

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number** (**HS1174/2015**) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal. Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor

the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired

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if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 218089183.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator

Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

Appendix B: WCED research approval letter

Western Cape Government

Education

Directorate: Research

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za

tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20150130-42704

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Ms Elzahn Rinquest
13 Sultana Road
Steynsrust
Somerset West
7130

Dear Ms Elzahn Rinquest

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: 'PLACE MAKING': INVESTIGATING THE PLACE-BASED IDENTITY NEGOTIATIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS IN THE INFORMAL SPACES OF THEIR SCHOOL

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:
1.   Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2.   Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3.   You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4.   Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5.   The Study is to be conducted from **01 March 2015 till 30 September 2015**
6.   No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7.   Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8.   A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9.   Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10.   A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11.   The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
                    The Director: Research Services
            Western Cape Education Department
            Private Bag X9114
            CAPE TOWN
            8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard
Directorate: Research
DATE: 30 January 2015

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Appendix C: Individual interview schedule

Interview Schedule: Semi-formal interviews

Biographical information:

Who do you live with?

Do you have any siblings?

What means of transport do you use? How do you get to school?

What primary school were you in?

Is this the only high school that you have been to? If not where else have you been?

a. Peer affiliations:

Do you always hang out with the same people at school?

How do you choose your friends?

Why do you choose to be friends with them?

How long have you been friends?

Do you like your group of friends?

Do you have a best friend? Who is your best friend?

Why do you think you are best friends?

Is it easy to make friends at school?

If you have disagreements or fights what are they about?

Is their competition / competitiveness amongst the group? Why?

Are your friends at school the same as your friends at home? Why?

b. Congregate in space:

When you come to school, when and where do you meet your friends?

WHERE do you hang out before school, at break times and after school? Why?

What do you do when you are not in class? Why?

Do you stay with the same group? Or move around?

What do you consider safe spaces? Why?

Are there unsafe spaces at your school? Why?

c. Group social identities

Do you know what group social identities are? In American teenage movies they always depict the kids hanging out in groups with labels like 'the nerds', 'the jocks', 'the cheerleaders' etc.

Tell me about the different groups of friends in your school?

What do you think about labeling people or groups of people?

If you could label yourself, what group would you put yourself in?

Do you move between different groups of friends?

Would you prefer it to be different? If you could be part of any other group what would that be? Why?

What do you think teachers think about the different social groups at your school?

Do you think teachers treat certain groups of students differently to others?

Appendix D: Focus group interview schedules

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Focus Group Schedule: Session 1

Theme: Physical and social resources (as it exists within the school setting).

When you think about your school and the way that it is structured/ built…

What spaces are available for you to hang out in when you are not in class?

What do these spaces look like?

(Tell me about the places where people hang out at break times. What do these places look like?)

What can you/ do people do there during break times?

Where do you go?

What / where is your favourite place?

Do you or other students spend time in spaces that you are not allowed to?

Are there places where you would like to spend time in that you aren't allowed to?

Do you think the school offers you enough physical places to hang out at?

Do you like the way these places look? What would you change if you could?

What social gatherings (anything other than academics) does the school offer/ organize? Do you attend? What do you think of them?

Focus Group Schedule: Session 2

Theme: Place making practices

a. Peer affiliations

How did you all become friends?

Why do you think you like to hang out together?

What do you like most about your group of friends?

What do your friends mean to you? Or how important are your friends to you?

Are there any school activities that you do together?

Do you have different roles in your group of friends?

b. Congregate in space

Tell me about the popular hang out places in school. Where are they and what do the students do there?

What do you do before school, at break times and after school?

What activities do other students do before school, during break, and after school?

Do students from different grades spend time together?

Are there specific places for specific grades to be during break times?

c. Group social identities

Do you know what group social identities are? In American teenage movies they always depict the kids hanging out in groups with labels like 'the nerds', 'the jocks', 'the cheerleaders' etc. What is your opinion of this?

Do you label groups of students?

What groups exist in your school?

If you could label yourself, what group would you be in?

Appendix E: Photography and photo-elicitation interviewing guidelines and agreement

Photo-elicitation guidelines & agreement:

1. Please take photographs of informal school spaces, for the duration of the school day on

…………………………... and hand the camera back to me on …………..………………...

2. I will print the photographs and we will meet up to chat about your photos on…………………

Agreement between Elzahn Rinquest and …………………………………………for the taking of photographs and the reproduction of the images taken:

1. ……………………………………….(name of student) agrees to take the photographs with a

digital camera (supplied by Elzahn) for the duration of one school day …………………………

and to meet up once to talk about the photographs on ……………………………………………

2. Elzahn Rinquest recognises the ownership of.…………………………………….(name of student)

for the photographs taken in the context of this research.

3. In the following,……………………………(name of student) expresses if she authorises Elzahn

to use her images in different publications and situations:

Use of images	Type of authorization		
	I authorise Elzahn to use all the photos I have taken. NB: People's faces will be anonymised.	I authorise Elzahn to use only a selection of my photographs.	I don't authorise Elzahn to use any of my photographs.
In Elzahn's Masters thesis			
In papers presented at conferences or scientific meetings			
In articles in journals			

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In articles in magazines or newspapers			
In books			
In websites of academic content			

4. Elzahn commits herself to communicate the results of her work to …………………………………

   and to ask for permission if she plans to publish images in means that are not explicitly included

   in this agreement.

5. The work of Elzahn Rinquest is strictly confidential and anonymous.

Name of student: …………………………………   Researcher: Elzahn Rinquest

Signature: ……………………………………………   Signature: …………………………………………

Date: ……………………………………………   Place: …………………………………………….