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Social Collisions

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INTRODUCTION

> The next world war, if there is one, will be a war between civilizations (Huntington, 1993: 39).

The coming together of socially distinct groups is often represented as violent and negative – Huntington's dire prognostication of the consequences of 'West' meeting 'Non-West' demonstrates the point in an extreme form. Contrary to such representations, however, encounters of difference need not have destructive outcomes. Social geographers have been among those who have sought to examine such encounters from a range of different perspectives. Such work has often been at the heart of what social geography is about: the ways in which the occupation and use of space is fought over, negotiated or challenged, as well as the processes through which space itself is socially constructed through these tensions (Lefebvre, 1991).

Contestations over space may result from what particular spaces materially contain, such as access to prized natural resources. More broadly, however, space is fought over (usually figuratively rather than actually) because the ability to control and shape it both reflects and is constitutive of power

(Keith and Pile, 1993). As Brown (2000: 3) writes: 'spatiality is already part and parcel of power/knowledge'. Since resistance or challenge to territorial dominance is always possible, control over space is never total. But powerful groups may occupy and control spaces through practices of exclusion which seek to enforce barriers to entry, or through policing strategies which regulate forms of behaviour in those spaces.

'Social collisions' are the result of change, usually (although not always) through the spatial mobility of at least one of the groups involved. This results in an encounter in a specific space, creating possibilities for tension and conflict. This may be because one group is viewed as 'invading' the space of another group and thus being 'out of place' (Cresswell, 1996), or because both groups are claiming territory which was previously understood or constructed as 'unclaimed'.

The colonial encounter is often presented as an extreme form of social collision – one where very different social groups found themselves occupying the same space. Pratt (1992: 7) uses the concept of a 'contact zone' to refer to that particular moment, describing the term as 'an attempt to invoke the spatial

and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical junctures, and whose trajectories now intersect'. Subjects meet in contact zones not only as individuals, but as persons belonging to particular social groupings that shape the outcome of the encounter. The concept of a 'contact zone' can also be drawn upon to discuss contemporary meetings between groups divided along particular social axes.

Simple representations of 'social collisions' fail to recognize, however, the complexities of such situations. As this chapter will outline, work on the encounters between social groups has increasingly engaged with diversity: the internal heterogeneity of groups, the timing or placing of the encounter, the importance of recognizing intersectionality, and how the encounters themselves provide opportunities for reflexivity that can result in a hardening of group boundaries or, alternatively, a chance for greater engagement and mutual understanding. The challenge within this work is to continue to highlight the importance of the 'social' and the way in which power is exercised along different axes, which, although their character changes over time and space, still produce and reinforce exclusion and marginalization.

In this chapter, after outlining some of the earlier work on social collisions in urban space, I go on to discuss work which has increasingly recognized the possibility that, rather than being inherently destructive or conflictual, the coming together of diverse individuals can sometimes have productive outcomes. In addition, interactions may be for a short period of time, or they may be an ongoing process. The meetings may also be rather mundane and 'everyday', or they may be very dramatic. As Sibley (1995: xiii) says, '[I]t is a truism that space is contested but relatively trivial conflicts can provide clues about power relations and the role of space in social control.' Thus, part of the chapter deals with the contrasts between what could be termed 'flashpoints' in temporal and spatial terms, and the more everyday encounters through which members of different groups

construct and experience their identities through engagements with 'the Other'. Such work also considers the sensory nature of social collision; where not only particular visual or spoken interactions result from or create social difference, but where noise or smells may contribute to the differences which collide in certain spaces.

Research has also highlighted how the nature of the space within which encounters take place will both shape and be shaped by the events. While social collisions are, in theory, possible in all spaces, it is in urban areas where engagement with diversity has been the most common (Young, 1990), and thus where social geographers have tended to focus their work (Jacobs and Fincher, 1998). This attention to the urban sphere will be obvious from this chapter, which draws heavily on research in these spaces, although rural engagements will also be mentioned.

Finally, although ethnicity/race has often been the main way in which social geographers have considered the meetings between different groups, it is important to identify the potential for creative or destructive outcomes from the coming together of groups divided by other forms of difference, such as class or sexuality. The ways in which these different groups are able to exercise power help shape the outcomes of these encounters.

This chapter is divided into five further sections. The first, on 'segregation', deals with early research on the ways in which the coming together of different groups results in spatial segregation. The next section considers how diversity and anti-essentialism has been dealt with in social geographical research, with a focus on the practices associated with cosmopolitanism and transnationalism. The chapter then considers particular flashpoints in both temporal and spatial terms, before going on to look at the ways in which the meetings between different groups are usually very mundane and everyday in quality. Finally, there is some consideration of possible future directions in geographical research about the coming together of different groups.

SEGREGATION

Much early work by social geographers focused on how social difference was inscribed on urban space through processes of residential segregation, particularly with reference to race or ethnicity. Thus, spatial segregation both reflected and minimized the potential social collisions, which were deemed as inevitable with the spatial and temporal co-presence of contrasting groups. This chimed with prevailing ideas of spatial distance and social distance being mutually reinforcing. Such segregation in the built environment reflected and reinscribed power relations (Sibley, 1995).

In the context of immigration, work in North America and Western Europe focused on processes of assimilation and acculturation, arguing that ethnic residential segregation would decline over time as immigrant groups adapted to their new environment (see, for example, Peach, 1975; Peach et al., 1981). In the US, such work clearly fitted with the wider political discourse around a 'melting pot' and the US as a 'society of immigrants', and drew on the pioneering work of the Chicago School of Sociology (Park et al., 1925).

Residential segregation was often presented as reflecting both a positive choice by the immigrant group and an outcome of fear and hostility. As newcomers, immigrants wanted to live in an environment which would provide social support and assistance in adapting to new ways of living. They thus stayed close to co-ethnic groups. Such behaviours also reflected the fear of potential or actual hostility on the part of the 'host' population; living with other immigrants from the same part of the world provided physical security and protection. In addition, research focused on ideas around 'tipping points' in residential neighbourhoods, where once a particular level of ethnic minority residents had been reached, a rapid exodus of the existing population (sometimes termed 'white flight') ensued (Glaster, 1990; Schwab and Marsh, 1980).

The nature of this research meant a focus on macro-level data, with a significant use of quantitative measures such as segregation indices. These measures were usually based on census information and used census tracts as the units of analysis. This meant a reliance on the categories used by census offices and the questions asked in the census. For example, in relation to work on race and immigration into England and Wales in the 1960s and 1970s, Jones highlights 'no question is asked [in the census] on skin colour or ethnic origin' (1978: 515), so place-of-birth information was used. While there was some attempt to consider the actual life contexts and experiences of immigrant and ethnic minority groups, in most such research it was assumed that causality could be modelled and assessed using macro-level socio-economic and demographic variables.

This approach to analysing, theorizing and understanding spatial outcomes of social difference in relation to immigration has received significant criticism. As Holloway (2000: 201) suggests, the theories developed through the lens of the US experience in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have inappropriately universalized the specific social and political contexts of migration at that particular time and place. There is, for example, a need to consider the internal heterogeneity of immigrant groups, as well as the manner in which distinct structural processes shaped the residential decisions of urban residents (Jackson, 1987). Even today, as Ellis and Wright (1998) argue, the use of the term 'balkanisation' to describe the continued ethnic separation in the US implies that these spatial patterns are reflections of choice on the part of 'minority' groups, rather than outcomes of much more complex processes.

During the 1980s, these more critical approaches to examining immigration and urban racial segregation developed significantly. Rather than focusing on the immigrant Other as the 'problem' who had to conform to the supposedly 'natural' host culture and way of life, researchers turned their

attention to questions of racism, both overt and institutional (see, for example, Smith, 1987, on English government housing policy; Hirsch, 1983, on housing policy in Chicago; Holloway, 2000, on mortgage availability for African-American home-buyers). Such processes reinforced and deepened patterns of racial segregation (whether between immigrant and non-immigrant groups or between ethnically distinct non-immigrant groups).

While research on encounters between different ethnic groups has increasingly recognized the complexities of such meetings (see the following section and Kobayashi and de Leeuw, Chapter 4 of this volume), it is also important to acknowledge and examine how the binaries of 'them' and 'us', particularly along immigration status lines, are mobilized and experienced. Examples include the propositions reducing illegal immigrant access to social services in California in the 1990s (Liu, 2000) or the construction of immigrants, particularly illegal ones, as a threat needing control (Mains, 2000). Similarly, marginalized groups have mobilized to present a united front against hostility and discrimination (see Pulido, 2007). In such situations, the collisions between different groups (albeit internally divided) are played out in particular political spaces: the polling booth, the border post, or the street, in the case of demonstrations.

In other contexts, the status of immigrants has meant that a very different set of processes has operated in relation to social collisions. As noted in the introductory section, colonialism involved very extreme forms of encounter in terms of the social distance between the parties involved. Colonial encounters resulted in the 'newcomers' imposing their ways of life on the 'native' population, albeit with differing outcomes. For present-day highly-skilled expatriate workers, the distinction between themselves and the bulk of the population is usually clear, in both class and ethnicity terms. For such migrant populations, the residential exclusivity of particular enclaves or compounds is viewed not as a temporary measure

en route to assimilation, but rather as a permanent way of life (Gordon, 2008). Such patterns are viewed as part of the spatial outcomes of changing economies in the world's global cities (Sassen, 2001).

Similarly, governments may encourage such separateness, or at least not promote assimilation. For example, the Singaporean government, while committed to policies of multiculturalism and ethnic residential mixing for 'Singaporeans', adopts a different approach when encouraging 'foreign talent' to the island state. This can lead to feelings of resentment on the part of the Singaporean population (Ho, 2006). In some countries, most notably China and some Middle Eastern states, foreigners are limited to particular residential enclaves or compounds.

Finally, before moving onto a discussion of how social geographers have developed their research to go beyond simple binaries and their associated expectations of social tensions and conflicts between different groups, it is important to recognize the existence of other axes of social difference which may result in conflict when groups encounter each other. In urban spaces, two key dimensions have been class/socioeconomic status and sexuality.

First, the operation of urban housing and land markets has meant that economically privileged households have been able to choose where they want to live, leaving poorer households to find accommodation in the remaining spaces of the city. As with ethnicity/race, segregation patterns and the extent and character of cross-class encounters are determined by the more powerful group. In some cases such encounters are made even less likely through the development of 'gated communities' (Alvarez-Rivadulla, 2007; Mycoo, 2006; Pow, 2007; Vesselinov et al., 2007), although there are some exceptions (Lemanski, 2006). Additionally, processes of 'gentrification' have become part of a 'global urban strategy' (Smith, 2002) in which the language of 'urban regeneration' or 'urban renewal' used by governments or private developers hides the dimensions of

class power underpinning such changes. 'Gentrification' invariably involves the displacement of existing low-income residents or their exclusion from plans to reinvigorate city centre districts experiencing depopulation (see, for example, Keith and Pile, 1993, on the regeneration of the London Docklands). Working-class populations are rarely included in the groups 'to be allowed back into the city' (Smith, 2002: 445). Gentrification is therefore a key process in creating opportunities for class-based social collisions, but it may also lead to new forms of segregation and boundary drawing which makes actual engagements across class lines much rarer.

Second, as the research on gays and lesbians makes clear, the city is also a site of sexual segregation. As was true with research into other social axes, the use of binary distinctions in the study of urban sexual spaces was not uncommon. This was not just a reflection of theoretical conceptualizations of how difference was inscribed on the ground, but also a response to the very real feelings and experiences of marginality held by gay men and lesbians in many parts of the world. As with work on immigrants and ethnic minority groups, the presence of 'gay districts' in certain cities, particularly in the global North, was interpreted as the outcome of a positive desire for 'sexual minorities' to live and socialize together, but also a response to wider experiences of discrimination and fears of homophobia (Bell and Valentine, 1995; Castells, 1983; Nash, 2006; Podmore, 2006).

Michael Brown (2000) uses 'the closet' as a way of interrogating the ways in which space is constitutive of social relations, in this case between heterosexual and homosexual populations. 'The closet' is a place of concealment which, Brown argues, can be everywhere but hidden. He considers the spatialities of the closet at a range of scales – from the space of the individual body to the globe. For example, in a chapter co-written with Paul Boyle, he highlights how the US and UK censuses render gay people invisible, thus producing the closet in national space.

In another chapter on the urban spaces of Auckland, New Zealand, the invisibility of gay social venues is used to demonstrate how the closet is actively produced in response to heteronormativity. Brown's work clearly shows that social collisions come in many forms and may result in absences or silences rather than in the more obvious or explicit claiming of space.

Social collisions as outlined in this section refer to the meeting of two or more internally homogenous groups. Residential segregation is one particular spatial outcome of this sort of encounter, which in this sense of the term may or may not involve an actual bodily encounter, but rather a coming together in urban space. While social geographers have built on this earlier work, recognizing both the complexity of such encounters and the ways in which broader economic, social and political conditions frame them, it is vital to continue to examine the very real ways in which binary forms of identification can lead to very real forms of discrimination, exclusion and violence.

RECOGNIZING DIVERSITY: MOVING BEYOND ESSENTIALISM

In this section I move on to discuss how social geographers have sought to bring diversity into their work, going beyond the relatively fixed categorization of groups in relation to one dimension of difference – gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality or class, for example. Here we find two general critiques. One is based on social geography's growing engagement with the concept of intersectionality (Valentine, 2007; also Peake, Chapter 1 of this volume), whereby the interacting and mutual constituting effects of different identity positions are examined. Clearly, it is important to recognize the multiplicity of identities in urban space. As Natter and Jones (1997: 144) warn, however, the presence of proliferating and intersecting axes of identity does not in itself constitute a critical stance

toward the original social categories; rather, it 'merely reinscribes a new system of boundaries around increasingly differentiated subjects' (also see Oswin, 2008, for a critique of work on the geographies of sexuality in this context). Another approach adopted by social geographers seeking to challenge essentialist forms of identity is to understand them as relational, and therefore the result of 'always contingent and incomplete processes rather than determined outcomes' (Keith and Pile, 1993: 34). Thus, identities and the nature of social encounters are framed by the particular temporal and spatial dimensions of the meeting. The spatial outcomes of such meetings are framed by the exercise of power but cannot be 'read off' from particular pre-ordained social categories.

Diversity of groups

In relation to immigration, constructions of a collision between 'immigrants' and 'non-immigrants' have been challenged with a significant amount of research that highlights different experiences of a range of immigrant groups coming into different locations (Mitchell, 1997; Winders, 2006). As highlighted in the earlier discussion of highly skilled expatriate workers, for some migrant groups the official welcome is very different from that for the unskilled, or for refugees or illegal migrants. This is typically the case for economically wealthy migrants who are viewed as making a significant contribution to the host economy, as outlined in Ong's (1999) work on 'flexible citizenship' as well as other research on the 'overseas Chinese' (Ley, 2003).

Among less wealthy migrants, concepts of social distance, for example around language or religion, may be used to explain government policy, or wider attitudes to immigrant groups. Stiell and England's work (1997) on domestic servants immigrating to Canada demonstrates very effectively how language, ethnicity and education shape the experiences of encounter between immigrant workers and their largely White employers. White English women with internationally recognized childcare qualifications find themselves treated, or being able to demand treatment, as equals, compared with other migrants, particularly those from the Caribbean and the Philippines.

Nationality and gender are two axes among multiple differences that have proven important in studies of the category of 'immigrant'. Some of this research has tended to present women as either victims or beneficiaries of the migration process, but much of it has provided more nuanced insights into the ways in which gendered immigration policies (Fincher, 1997; Kofman, 2000; Walton-Roberts, 2004), social networks (Salaff and Greve, 2004) and job opportunities (Kofman and Raghuram, 2006) result in varied immigration experiences – all of which can vary by region of origin. Jones-Correa (1998) highlights the ways in which Latin American immigrants to New York draw on different resources and conceptions of their new status to deal with their novel environment. 'Social collision' for many of the men resulted in a decrease in workplace status, leading them to participate in immigrant political networks to gain respect. Alternatively, many women used their existing social networks, as well as engagement with welfare services, to carve out a niche for themselves and their families. Other researchers have drawn attention to the potential collisions between individuals who are viewed as having the same ethnicity but fall on different sides of the immigration divide. In particular, this work has focused on the relations between Latino populations in the US who were either born in the US or who have legal immigrant status, and more recent illegal immigrants (Ochoa, 2004; Zavella, 2000). In some cases (see, for example, Pulido, 2007), these tensions have been played out with Mexican-Americans being involved in protests against illegal immigration. Such examples demonstrate the limits of using an essentialist idea of shared ethnicity as a way of understanding encounters between different groups.

Multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism

Recognition of the diversity of groups went some way in developing a more nuanced approach to the study of encounters between different migrant and non-migrant groups. There is, however, an increasing awareness of the multiplicity of interactions between groups, including how the blurred nature of group boundaries affects social interactions. This research has drawn from and developed concepts such as multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. In particular, research has sought to question the more celebratory ways in which such concepts are mobilized, particularly for political ends.

The concept of 'multiculturalism' highlights or promotes the coexistence, mutual respect and understanding of different cultural or ethnic groups in one location, perhaps a city or a town. A discourse of people being 'different but equal' is a key dimension. In contrast, 'cosmopolitanism' implies a similar kind of cultural diversity, but encompasses a celebration of the ability of individuals to operate across group divides and 'a willingness to engage with the Other' (Hannerz, 1996: 103; see also Hannerz, 1990). It has often been used as a way of promoting a particular image, especially as part of gentrification processes in urban areas (Young et al., 2006).

While the notion of a 'cosmopolitan' space implies difference, inclusion and boundary crossing, what social geographers have highlighted is that the notion of 'cosmopolitan', or spaces of cosmopolitanism, are in fact exclusionary, promoting particular visions of urban space that rely on certain forms of cultural capital. These tend to favour people from privileged socio-economic groups, thereby reproducing existing structures of power and influence (Ley, 2004; Yeoh, 2004). In the context of their work in Manchester, UK, Young et al. highlight how 'the figure of the cosmopolitan produces an "other" who is defined by their not possessing the "correct" attitude or type of difference' (2006: 1705).

In this case, the high end nature of consumption spaces produced as part of 'cosmopolitanism' limits participation by low-income groups, while the homeless and other marginal groups are explicitly excluded.

Kothari (2008) challenges the association of cosmopolitan attitudes and behaviours with elite and economically rich populations with her study of Bangladeshi and Senegalese male street traders in Barcelona. In order to succeed in their occupations as illegal or informal traders, these men have had to become very adaptable to a range of cultural environments, knowing among other things how to engage customers of different nationalities, which stock to choose and how to negotiate Spanish bureaucracy and the police system. The ability to operate in a range of environments with very different people clearly places them in a category that could be called 'cosmopolitan'. While in some cases these practices may be part of what Kothari calls 'strategic cosmopolitanism', which is adopted at particular times to meet certain livelihood requirements, these social skills could also survive and morph into new forms of identification.

Transnationalism

Linked to approaches to migration which highlight how social collisions may result in outcomes other than conflict, the spatial dynamics of transnationalism have also led to new ways of examining encounters across national borders. In particular, transnational practices have added further challenges to the earlier expectations of migrant assimilation to a homogenous host culture (Stodolska and Santos, 2006). An interesting dimension of transnationalism, which has been the focus of increasing research, is the experiences of second-generation migrants who have 'returned' to the homeland of their parents or grandparents. Such movements have provided new forms of social collision which are often unexpected from the point of view of the 'return migrant' whose emotional

attachments and self-identifications appear to be linked to their parental home. For example, Christou (2006) discusses the experiences of Greeks who were born overseas 'returning' to Greece and confronting the recognition that while they may be 'Greek', their outlook on life and their expectations have been framed by their lives elsewhere. A similar jolt of recognition is experienced by Chinese Singaporeans working in China (Yeoh and Willis, 2005).

Such research has also highlighted the disappointments of those who migrate to resolve feelings of being 'out of place' or marginalized elsewhere. Once again, migrants bring different experiences and are viewed by 'host' populations through that lens and the particular histories of that location. Potter and Phillips (2008), in their work on Bajan-Brits returning or going to live in Barbados describe how racism they experienced in the UK, where they were part of an ethnic minority group, was also found in Barbados where they were part of a Black majority. The racism was of a different form, but the privileging of whiter skin and particular ways of speaking meant that these Bajan-Brits had to continue negotiating their ways through the maze of locally constructed social difference. Examples such as these show how identities are not fixed or pre-given, but are made through social encounters.

Work on transnationalism has also helped challenge the assumptions that migration from the Global South to the Global North produces a particular form of clash between 'modernity' and 'tradition'. In relation to earlier work on immigration and assimilation, although the terms 'traditional' and 'modern' were often not used, the implicit assumption was that migrants from economically poorer countries would eventually adapt to 'modern' ways of living. The increasing ability of some groups to move backwards and forward across international borders, as well as rapid economic growth in some parts of the Global South, has meant that previously accepted patterns of encounter have changed. These patterns are drawn out in work by Walton-Roberts and Pratt (2005), who use the example of an upper-middle-class Indian family which moves between India and Canada. Finally, the cultural practices of earlier migrants may have ossified, leaving more recent migrants from the same places bemused by their compatriots' activities.

SOCIO-SPATIAL COLLISIONS: PROGRESSIVE AND OTHERWISE

As the previous discussions show, the relational and contingent nature of identity and group affiliation requires an understanding of how particular forms of difference are both mobilized and experienced. And, in the absence of essentialist identities, perhaps we should not be too surprised to find that 'social collisions' can take many forms. Indeed, cooperation across lines of difference has been another area of social geographic research and provides examples of positive and progressive outcomes, rather than purely discriminatory or conflictual ones. Such cooperation is not, however, without its difficulties, as all groups involved have to negotiate ways of managing difference.

Heather Merrill's work (2006) on the anti-racist organization Alma Mater in Turin, Italy, is an excellent example of the dynamics of social alliance in the face of multiple religious, national and class differences. Alma Mater seeks to provide economic and social support for immigrant women in the context of a city with a long history of class-and feminist-based politics, but with escalating anti-immigrant feelings. Disputes within the organization reflect broader societal fractures, particularly across class lines, both within particular immigrant groups and between immigrant women and the Italian women involved in the group. On a larger scale, particular historical junctures may provide opportunities for more formal political alliances. An example of this in the US is the 'Rainbow Coalition', which formed around Jesse Jackson's bid for the presidential nomination

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for the Democratic Party in the 1980s (Rogers, 1990). Such moments may be historically fleeting, but again represent ways of coming together without conflict, with multiple parties working for greater understanding and a more progressive politics.

Social geographers have also been involved in trying to forge progressive partnerships in their research, particularly through an increasing focus on participatory methods and what has been termed 'participatory action research' (PAR). This involves researchers facilitating and supporting members of marginalized groups to set the research agenda, provide their insights into the problems they identify, and suggest solutions (Cahill, 2007; Kraftl and Horton, 2007). As with all forms of alliance, the subconscious exercise of power based on pre-existing hierarchies is often very difficult to overcome, and in a research context, external pressures from funding agencies or universities are an additional obstacle (Pain and Francis, 2003).

In terms of a more aggressive and conflictual concept of 'social collision', it is important to look at particular flashpoints, both in temporal and social terms. Such flashpoints usually occur in public space. As McCann (1999: 179) discusses in the context of racial segregation in Lexington, Kentucky: 'Contemporary public spaces are designed to keep the frequency of uncomfortable encounters to a minimum and to maintain a rigid power relation between Whites and people of color when such encounters do take place, while at the same time maintaining a veneer of unity and homogeneity'. Such uneasy coexistence can be threatened, as in the case of Lexington when the death of a young African-American man during a police raid led to protests and demonstrations in the usually White-dominated downtown area (see also Dwyer and Jones III, 2000).

Research has highlighted how the activities of supposedly marginalized groups can challenge the way that power is inscribed in urban spaces. This may be intentional, for example through parades, or it could be less conscious. Work on different types of parade

has been used to demonstrate the agency of marginalized groups and to show their ability to make their presence felt through the occupation of spaces from which they are usually excluded, or are tolerated only if they follow certain behavioural norms. In some cases, such events may generate tensions and actual conflict, either between participants and observers (see for example O'Reilly and Crutcher, 2006 on the policing of a gay pride march in New Orleans), or between would-be participants and organizers, as with New York City's St Patrick's Day parade, whose organizers regularly excluded a local Irish lesbian and gay organization (Marston, 2002). The meanings and experiences of such cultural events may also change over time. For example, the Notting Hill Carnival in West London was originally established to celebrate Caribbean (and particularly Trinidadian) culture and identity in a city where racism and discrimination were common.

Similar processes have been examined in the context of leisure spaces. For example, research in Singapore and Hong Kong (Law, 2002; Yeoh and Huang, 1998) has shown how immigrant low-skilled workers occupy certain spaces in the city during their leisure time, transforming the previously highly regulated spaces of Statue Square, Hong Kong and Lucky Plaza, Singapore, among others, into new forms of social space. Such occupation of space brings out the ways in which individuals who are often framed purely as 'immigrants' or in terms restricted to their occupations – 'domestic servants' or 'construction workers' – are able to mobilize other forms of identity, particularly along lines of nationality. Such actions are rarely overt strategies to challenge and claim space by marginalized groups, but, as Law says, in the context of Filipino domestic workers in Statue Square, Hong Kong: 'While this collective feeling of "our place" may not fall within the classic understanding of resistance, it does help to create an alternative public sphere/space for self-expression' (2002: 1637).

Research on young people and their use of public space has also illuminated tensions and conflicts. Sibley (1995: xii) argues that the presence of unaccompanied young people in shopping malls 'necessarily constitutes deviance', because they are viewed as not acting as consumers within the capitalist, regulated space of the mall. Conflicts involving young people may be a result of security guards removing them from the premises, or may be due to other mall users, or residents, feeling threatened by the presence of young people (Vanderbeck and Johnson, 2000).

Shifts in the urban fabric may also provide moments of tension and direct confrontation between different groups. The move in many cities in both the Global North and South to promote the city as a location for investment has led to the proposed clearance of low-income housing and processes of gentrification (see the special issue of *Environment and Planning A*, 2007). Such activities are clear examples of a collision between social groups, along socio-economic lines but also often along ethnic or racial lines (He and Wu, 2007). The confrontations represent not only the meeting of different social groups, but also how broader structures of power (e.g., city governments) work to favour particular sectors of society (see also Smith, 2002, on urban regeneration). Research on homelessness policies also reveals how particular urban spaces are 'cleansed' of undesirables as part of city regeneration strategies (Mitchell, 1995).

EMBODIMENT AND EVERYDAY ENCOUNTERS

While the importance of social differences and the spatial structuring of social worlds has been vital in understanding the encounters between different groups in particular times and places, social geographers have also been mindful of the way these interactions – progressive or not – are based on embodied sensual experiences. As with work on transnationalism and cosmopolitanism, this work overlaps with that which may be termed 'cultural geography', and has been part of a growing tide of work aimed at 'rematerialising social and cultural geography' (Jackson, 2000). Social collisions are often physical encounters between bodies which are marked and understood as different; research has, however, also highlighted the way that other senses, particularly smell and hearing, have been implicated in experiencing difference and creating tensions. While extreme encounters may occur at flashpoint moments or locations, most encounters are more mundane, yet may either reinforce feelings of difference or increase the potential for cooperation and collaboration (see Amin, 2002, on the importance of everyday encounters in urban space).

The focus on the everyday and the mundane as a way of understanding social collisions is vital because so many forms of exclusion are taken for granted by the dominant group(s). Often, it is only when there is a build-up of tension to the point that a particular conflict or controversy erupts that the impacts of marginalization become apparent to the powerful. By considering the 'oddness of the ordinary' (Sibley, 1995: xv) – how social differences are experienced and managed on an everyday basis – we can glean insights into social collisions on a larger scale (Smith, 2001).

Many of these sorts of collisions are urban-dependent. As Thrift (2005: 140) states, 'urban experiences are the result of juxtapositions which are, in some sense, dysfunctional, which jar, scrape and rend'. Research is increasingly focusing on interrogating these experiences through an examination of the mundane. However, the majority of this work has dealt with more privileged groups, in particular 'transnational elites' and expatriates. This has been a response to some of the earlier work on these groups that presented them as 'placeless' because of their location within the workings of transnational capital (Sklair, 2001). But, as Ley (2004) and others have demonstrated,

there is a need to recognize the grounded nature of transnationalism, especially the everyday practices of leisure and work that are created through social interactions in particular spaces (Conradson and Latham, 2005).

These interactions are usually face to face and visual difference is thus a key part of the process. However, difference can also be marked through other senses, such as the way people speak, or particular smells. Naylor and Ryan (2002) discuss tensions in South London around the expansion of the London Fazl mosque. Among the issues that were highlighted by local residents was the question of noise, most notably the call to prayer and the use of loudspeakers during services (see also Valentine, 2008).

Research on everyday encounters has benefited from ethnographic approaches, although more formal interviews remain important methods in some cases. A participant observation approach is not new in studies of social encounters in the city (Ley, 1974, and see Jackson, 1985, for a summary), but the recognition of how everyday processes construct broader understandings of social difference has brought it to the fore. Similarly, the 'emotional turn' in human geography (Anderson and Smith, 2001) has also required a rethinking of the ways in which social geographers go about researching particular themes or questions. This is very different from the quantitative research which dominated social segregation research in the past and which still has an important role to play in examining the nature of social engagement.

NEW DIRECTIONS

Given the very dynamic nature of social geographical work on migration, gentrification and social engagement in the city, trying to suggest new avenues of research or possible methodological directions is fraught with difficulties. There are, however, some emerging areas within human geography that offer useful starting points for further work on social collisions.

First, given the importance of spatial and temporal context for framing particular social encounters, the use of more multi-sited research would help contribute to an understanding of how particular groups are constructed and interact within and across very different political, economic and cultural environments. George Marcus (1995) calls for the adoption of 'multi-sited ethnography' within anthropology as a way not just of providing comparisons between sites, but of actually developing an understanding of how flows of people, things or ideas operate and the grounded experiences which result from these flows.

AQ: Marcus (1995) is not listed

Second, research on social collisions has often been focused on the 'less powerful', whether that be ethnic minority communities, immigrants, gay men and lesbians or working-class urban residents (see also Pain and Hopkins, Chapter 2 of this volume). Such a focus has commonly been aimed at highlighting inequalities and injustices, but it has also reinforced ideas of difference which privilege and leave uncontested the 'powerful'. By challenging the supposed 'norm', we arguably gain equal insights into the power dynamics of marginalization and difference construction. Examples include the work of Bonnett (2000), who studies 'whiteness', and Hubbard (2000), who highlights the constructed nature of heterosexuality. However, very little research on social collisions involves work across a range of participants. The focus instead has tended to remain on one particular group and the way in which its experiences are constructed and understood in relation to an 'other' - which typically remains silent. As collisions inherently involve more than one party, engagement across the divide by researchers could be very productive.

A third area of possible future research draws on the rapidly emerging field of geographical work relating to emotions (Anderson and Smith, 2001). Examining the

emotional experiences of social collision could help extend our understandings of such encounters, going beyond obvious material outcomes such as displacement or exclusion. Feelings of anger, joy, sadness, despair or hope, for example, may come from social encounters and will in turn help constitute particular identities. These may be viewed as progressive and contribute to Amin's (2002) vision of positive and harmonious urban relations. Alternatively, negative emotions of resentment and anger may entrench existing divisions, creating the conditions for violent collisions.

Fourth, recent work on hospitality and the ethics of engagement could contribute a great deal to research on social collisions. Barnett (2005: 16) argues, drawing on Derrida, that 'hospitality' requires borders or boundaries between individuals and groups: '[t]hresholds are the very scenes for the drama of responsiveness, hospitality and responsibility.' Boundaries are necessary because hospitality is predicated on the arrival of strangers into spaces controlled by others. Barnett holds that it is not only boundaries that are important for hospitality, but also the recognition of the nature of 'the stranger' (whether a person or group) whose presence inscribes difference. He concludes by calling for a hospitality based on a process of acknowledging otherness. Popke (2007: 516) draws a similar conclusion in calling for an openness 'to different ways of doing and being', thus potentially contributing to new ways of engaging with non-essentialist but politically progressive forms of theorizing social collision.

Finally, social collisions may be created or exacerbated by changing geopolitical processes. Geographical research which is mindful of how relations between existing social groups may be transformed by larger-scale events is key in developing understandings of the contingent nature of identity. For example, Phillips (2006) discusses the rising Islamaphobia experienced by British Muslims in the post-September 11th 2001 world. Government immigration policies, such as EU agreements with North African nations regarding the detention of illegal immigrants or the processing of immigrant applications, are also creating new spaces of exclusion without a physical collision between groups. Future research engaging with these shifting geopolitical landscapes is vital if progressive and ethical policies and possibilities are to emerge.

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