Progress reports

Discovering white ethnicity and parachuted plurality

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My previous report dealt substantially with the impact of the publication of the 1991 census of Great Britain, which included, for the first time, a question on ethnicity (Peach, 1999a). Work on the spatial analysis of minorities continues apace. Two journals (*Urban Studies* and *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*) devoted special issues to articles on the geography of ethnicity (van Kempen and Özüekren,1998; Ogden and Charbit, 1999). The *Revue Européenne* concentrated on the results of the British 1991 census, apart from Findlay *et al.*'s (1999) article on Hong Kong. The special issue of *Urban Studies* had the ambitious remit of 'Ethnic segregation in cities: new forms and explanations in a dynamic world'.

The special issue of *Urban Studies* contained four articles on British cities (Daley, 1998; Peach, 1998; Phillips, 1998; White, 1998), two articles on Germany (Friedrichs, 1998, on Cologne; Kemper, 1998, on post-unification Berlin), one article on Vienna (Giffinger, 1998), two on Dutch cities (Burgers, 1998; van Kempen and van Weesep, 1998), one article on Brussels (Kesteloot and Cortie, 1998), one on Stockholm (Murdie and Borgegård, 1998) and one on polarization, public housing and racial minorities in US cities (Carter *et al.*, 1998). Kemper's article is particularly interesting as it shows that, although the physical traces of the Berlin Wall have disappeared, the social geography of the city still bears its traces in the behavioural geography of East and West Berliners.

The *Revue Européenne* contained articles by Ogden and Charbit (1999), reviewing the history of migration and ethnicity in Britain since the arrival of the *Empire Windrush*, the first West Indian migrant ship in 1948; Peach (1999b) on ethnic groups in the 1991 census; Owen (1999) on recent changes in the geography of minority ethnic groups; Richard (1999) on racism and the far-right vote in Docklands; and Hurdley and White (1999) on the Japanese in Britain. There is a critical review by Champion (1999) on the four ONS ethnicity volumes discussed in my previous progress report (1999a) and a useful review by Clarke *et al.* (1999) on international migration flows to the UK. In a sensitive article, Deborah Phillips (1998) shows the diverging class, housing and spatial

trajectories of ethnic groups within the 'south Asian' umbrella. She argues for the force of self-segregation among some Asian minority communities. However, the positive value of segregation in this case is tied to the negative of racial harassment. The effect of all these articles is to unpack the single category of 'black' or 'race' into which the minority ethnic populations were often compressed in the literature of the 1960s to the 1980s.

If the attempt to impose a single 'black' identity on diverse ethnicities was a bad fault of the past, in the 1990s, homogenizing 'whiteness' is now considered to be worse. Geographers, notably Alastair Bonnett (1997) and Peter Jackson (1998) have made significant contributions to this debate. However, it is difficult to accept fully Bonnett's claim that whiteness had been erased from scrutiny in the geographical literature. Social geography does, after all, share a common literature with spatial sociology and scrutiny of whiteness has certainly remained active there.

Most scholars accept that race and ethnicity are social constructs. Indeed, cultural geographers, when speaking in conferences, often engage in a kind of aerobic exercise in which they raise both arms and use two fingers of each hand to inscribe inverted commas around the terms which they are forced to use but to which they do not subscribe. Jackson (1998), in a world-weary footnote, announced his discontinuance of inverted commas around the term race did not imply a belief in the objective existence of the phenomenon. Ethnicity and race are contextual rather than essentialist: I may be Welsh in England, British in Germany, European in Thailand, White in Africa (Peach, 1996b: 5).

Thus, in criticizing the way in which 'whiteness' is used, it is important to distinguish between those who use it contingently and those who use it in an essentialist way. Groups can slip into and out of 'whiteness' or 'blackness'. Ignatiev (1996) makes the point that, in the nineteenth century, the Irish were considered to be black and he illustrates his point with contemporary cartoons. Allen (1994), in *The invention of the white race*, and Jacobson (1998) in *Whiteness of a different color: European immigrants and the alchemy of race*, also show how white groups have become 'white'. 'White' is useful as a category at a particular scale of analysis, but this does not mean it is useful at all scales or that the category is unproblematic.

Earlier evidence in the sociospatial literature of the refusal to accept whiteness as a taken-for-granted term comes from Kantrowitz (1969). In his study of New York segregation he makes the key point that African Americans were not simply segregated from whites *per se*: they were segregated from individual white ethnicities (British, Irish, Germans, Italians and so on) and white ethnicities were themselves segregated from each other. Even the Norwegians were segregated from the Swedes. Jackson, in his follow-up study of New York (1981), reinforced this point.

White does remain a useful category, therefore, for capturing some geographical differences. Wright and Ellis (1996) use it to good effect in their analysis of the New York City labour market between 1970 and 1990 and in their parallel, but contrasting, study of Los Angeles over the same time period (Wright and Ellis, 1997). 'Whiteness' has come into prominence as a way of highlighting the emergence of New York as a minority-majority city in the USA. On the other hand, Ellis and Wright (1998) take issue with another term – 'balkanization' – castigating, among others, geographers such as Frey (1995) for its emotive usage.

Mainstream geographical scholarship, has long been aware of intrawhite ethnic

differences. For example, the different traditions of the Irish have a significant social geographic literature: Jones (1960), Boal (1969), Doherty (1973), Walter (1980), Chance (1996) and Compton (1996). For other white ethnicities, Peach (1980) used spatial data to demonstrate that Kennedy's earlier attempt to unpack the white melting pot of America into a triple melting pot based on religion was incorrect. Newman (1985) and Waterman and Kosmin (1986) demonstrated that, within the white population of London, the Jewish population was significantly segregated. Indeed, the point of much of the British literature on the racialized minorities was to argue that ethnicity rather than race *per se* was the issue (Modood, 1988). The political correctness of attempting to force a 'black' identity on all minority groups was as damaging to true understanding as the failure to deconstruct whiteness.

The bulk of the spatial analysis of residential segregation in the USA in the 1940s to the 1960s (for example Ford, 1950; Duncan and Lieberson, 1959; Lieberson, 1963; Kiang, 1968; Kantrowitz, 1969) was concerned with differences between white ethnic groups. Successive waves of European immigrants were seen following each other into the centrifuge of the city. The 'old' migrants (British, Irish, German, Scandinavians) came first. In their wake came the 'new' (southern and eastern Europeans from Italy, Poland and Russia). The earlier literature charted a brick-in-a-pond cycle of residential and social change (Peach, 1996a).

The arrival of large-scale non-European migration to cities in the USA (and Europe) has had, as Waldinger (1996) noted in an influential book, two important effects. First, it propelled the earlier arrivals up the social and economic ladder and, secondly, the upward mobility eroded intrawhite differences (reducing segregation and promoting intermarriage). The subsequent literature of the 1970s and 1980s has sometimes corralled white groups into a homogenized whole, while othering their non-European successors. However, as Waldinger shows, African-Americans failed to benefit from this shunting process, and newer, lighter-skinned groups have leap-frogged them in terms of residential dispersal. Whiteness *per se* is an issue.

The deconstruction of whiteness, however, has thrown light on to some old problems. On the whole, the literature has taken for granted that high levels of segregation are characteristic of marginalized and racially discriminated groups only, and that all high levels of segregation are negative, imposed, involuntary and transitory. New research indicates that high levels are also found among the affluent as well as the poor, the discriminating as well as the discriminated and for positive as well as negative reasons. Research by Alba *et al*. (1997) indicates there may be a revival of white ethnic neighbourhoods in the New York suburbs.

My previous report introduced the concept of 'parachuted plurality in the suburbs' to denote a new phenomenon of affluent immigrants concentrated in leafy suburbs. Instead of the traditional 'brick in the pond' central concentration of the first generation, the new pattern achieves instant suburbanization but remains fairly segregated. The Hong Kong 'astronauts' in Vancouver were, perhaps, the harbingers of this new transnational pattern. David Ley's (1995) article and that by Katharyne Mitchell (1997) on the conflicting cultural appraisals of upper-class suburban Vancouver neatly tie together the social and cultural geography. However, Zelinsky and Lee (1998: 286) have divined a newer pattern and coin a newer term – 'heterolocalism'. They argue some of the new immigrant waves to the USA are achieving not simply instant suburbanization, but instant dispersal 'with only a slight tendency toward a loose sort of clustering'.

They argue, in what may be a controversial piece, that propinquity is no longer necessary for the maintenance of ethnic communities.

Scrutinizing the literature for deconstructions of whiteness reveals other evidence for this phenomenon. There is an early note by de Lannoy (1975) of elevated levels of American segregation in Brussels. Glebe's (1986) analysis of the Japanese in Düsseldorf produced evidence of high segregation and residential concentration of the Japanese. Most recently, an article by Paul White (1998: 1741) carries the argument much further, looking at the distribution of developed world migrants in London in 1991:

> In . . . London, ethnicity clearly plays a role amongst the new migration streams such that class and economic relationships are not the sole determinant of residential distributions. This is very clearly so amongst the Japan-born, where levels of urban segregation closely resemble those applying to the most deprived of London's minorities.

White indicates that, for both the Japanese and the French, the infrastructural anchors of special schools and good communication lines explain much of their geography. Moreover 'Frog Valley' in Kensington has joined the established epithet of 'Kangaroo Valley' in nearby Earls Court. Where is a social geographer to investigate the reinvention of south London districts: St Ockwell, Bahtersia, Ba'am and Cla'am (Stockwell, Battersea, Balham and Clapham)?

There were studies of Jewish segregation in London in the 1980s (Newman, 1985; Waterman and Kosmin, 1986; 1988) which showed significant concentrations in affluent areas of northwest London. These were not the parachuted communities of the Chinese in Vancouver or London's Japanese, but examples of diffusion without dispersal (Johnston, 1971: 113). The great difficulty which Newman (1985) and Waterman and Kosmin (1988) faced was lack of statistical data. Neither the British nor American censuses collect data on Jewish ethnicity. The American census specifically prevents collection of data on religion, and the Jewish population is classified as a religious rather than an ethnic group. The result is that although it was possible to indicate significant levels of Jewish concentration, it was not possible to calculate indices of dissimilarity which could link such studies to the rest of the quantitative literature. However, in Canada, the census allows the Jewish population to identify itself both as a religious and as an ethnic group. Hiebert (1995) shows that, in Toronto in 1931, the Jewish population was 'extraordinarily segregated' with an index of dissimilarity (ID) of 65. Darroch and Marston's (1972) work shows even higher levels (in the 1970s) of Jewish segregation in Toronto in the 1961 census. Richard Dennis (1997) has also contributed an intricate socioeconomic historical geographical analysis of Toronto Jewry.

Although anti-semitism must play a part in such elevated levels of segregation, the indications are that such concentrations exist for predominantly positive reasons of ethnic preservation and social interaction. The construction of *eruvim* is a powerful evidence for voluntaristic concentrations. Observant Jews are forbidden on the sabbath to carry objects in any area defined as a public domain or an 'unenclosed area' (Bechhofer, 1993: 3). 'Carrying' includes pushing a pram or wheelchair, having keys or money in one's pocket. However, by rabbinically defining an enclosed area (with street furniture of poles and wires) a part of a town (an *eruv*) may become enclosed and such carrying activities are permitted. Many North American cities have *eruvim* and the proposal for the construction of an *eruv* in north- west London was finally approved in

1999. Thus the creation of demarcated areas, as well as the more evident markers of ethnoreligious identity (synagogues, mosques, gurdwaras, mandirs), are phenomena which tie together the more statistical approaches of social geography with some of the more physical concerns of cultural geography.

Some of the highest levels of ethnic segregation among white groups nevertheless occur for predominantly negative reasons. Fred Boal, who has chronicled the geography of social segregation in Belfast, has produced a beautifully illustrated retrospective on Belfast (Boal, 1995). The book contains a chilling chart of the ratchet effect of Catholic/non-Catholic segregation in 1840–1991 (Boal, 1995: 27). The chart shows a stepped rise in segregation levels. Each period of trouble is marked by a rise; as calm is restored, the level drops but to a level higher than the one from which it started. In the 1840s the ID was about 50; by the 1990s it was nearing 80. The process of diffusion and reducing segregation levels is neither unidirectional nor inevitable. Boal (1994) also contributed a chapter to a valuable Fulbright publication on *Managing divided cities* (Dunn, 1994). The same collection contains chapters by Susan and Norman Fainstein (1994), Nathan Glazer (1994), Peter Marcuse (1994) and Saskia Sassen (1994) among others.

One of the conclusions to be drawn from the studies reviewed here is that the minorities in the 1960s to the 1980s which were sometimes compressed into a single 'black race' category are now being teased out into their constituent ethnicities, classes and genders (Robinson, 1993). Whites are also being unpacked from their homogenized categorization. At the same time, new patterns of settlement and segregation are being recognized. Transnationalism is transforming the ethnic enclave from being a feature of deprivation in the inner city into affluent closure in the suburbs; ethnic villages of the audible rather than the visible minorities are appearing. Welcome Kangaroo Valley, welcome Frog Vale! Welcome to Ba'am – gateway to the upper class!

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