

Creating an Awareness of Others

Highlighting the Role of Space and Place

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ABSTRACT: The world of Others is little considered in human geography beyond essentialist and imperialist' calls for a recognition of cultural diversity and mutual understanding. Others are those groups in society who are generally marginalised or excluded on the basis of some characteristic(s) (e.g. disability, race, gender, sexuality, lifestyle). In this article, it is argued that school-based geography is a modernist enterprise which treats space as a container of objects and place as the arrangement of those objects. It is suggested that the national curriculum should include new developments within academic geography which recognises that social relations are socially constructed and that space is not passive and abstract but rather that space is dynamic, contested and socially produced. As such, space is a powerful medium that regulates human life. Space acts as a social text, conveying messages of belonging and exclusion, and socio-spatial organisation is an important agent in maintaining and reproducing current power relations within society. Using the example of disability, the power of space and place in shaping social life is illustrated. In the final section, possible classroom agendas are outlined based around three related themes: exploring socio-spatial constructions of difference; investigating the spatial manifestations of difference; and examining social justice.

AS EDWARDS (1996) ARGUES school-based geography is predicated on a set of modernist assumptions and is, as Philo (1993) suggests, centred on human-environment relations and regional differentiation. Within this framework, geography consists of three modes of analysis: spatial, ecological and regional. The combined aim of three modes is to explain social and spatial relations at a variety of scales through scientific and empirical means. Within this approach, some

emphasis is given to Others (people who are generally marginalised or excluded on the basis of some characteristic(s) (e.g. disability, race, gender, sexuality, lifestyle)) and cultural difference. For example, secondary school students in Northern Ireland undertake work that seeks mutual understanding at both local and global scales (CCEA, 1996). However, the categories used to denote different groups are portrayed as essentialist and imperialist (there are differences between people and these differences are 'natural' and given) rather than being socially constructed (people are the same but are categorised and treated differently in order to make sense of the world and maintain power relations). School geography, then, approaches Others as inherently different, and seeks to highlight why these groups are in conflict or how these groups might reach some level of mutual understanding. Little consideration is given to whether these groupings are essentialist or constructed. Here, space is understood as the container of objects and place as the arrangement of those objects. Geographers, as objective and neutral observers, just collect and analyse the data presented. There is little recognition of space and places as social and cultural texts, or the wider significance of socio-spatial organisation in maintaining and sustaining current social relations. Similarly, there is no exposition of the positionality of the researcher or the social politics of research.

So far, the national curriculum has been slow to pick up on the ideas of post-modern, post-structural and feminist work, which has slowly developed within many university syllabuses. As Bowlby (1992) notes, whilst in the past there were few empirical studies or widely available literature sources, there now exists a rich vein of material which provide both theoretical and practical examples of more critical studies (see Jackson, 1989; Rose, 1993; Keith and Pile, 1993; Bell and Valentine, 1995; Sibley, 1995; Cresswell, 1996; Duncan, 1996 for an introduction to the literature). The work contained within these studies represents a significant change of emphasis within human geographic research. Here, there is the recognition of the constructed differences between people, an acknowledgement that knowledge is produced, and a realisation that social relations are not essentialist (given) but socio-spatially constructed. The argument developed here is that critical studies should reach the school curriculum because they challenge conventional, modernist thinking, and open children's eyes to the ways in which

stereotypical cultural representations and myths work to maintain current socio-spatial relations. This argument is given context when one considers the various tensions that exist within both the playground and wider society.

This article is divided into three sections. In the first section, the notion of otherness and Others is introduced. In the second section, the role of space and place in reproducing the processes of socio-spatial exclusion, and the practices of discrimination, are discussed. In the final section, possible classroom agendas to explore the 'geographies of Others'² and address issues of social exclusion and social justice are examined. This discussion has been divided into three related themes: exploring socio-spatial constructions of difference; investigating the spatial manifestations of difference; and examining social justice. Within each theme potential classroom exercises are suggested. The central argument is simple: we need to upgrade the school curriculum so that it covers new thoughts in relation to difference, diversity and social justice. As such, it is contended that within the geographical curriculum, children's eyes should be opened to the socio-spatial processes and bases of exclusion and oppression that are at work in society, and the distinct spatialities that arise through marginalisation. The issue of addressing new developments within the discipline, which have wider social implications, is given impetus by Rawling:

'the need to talk about the nature of the subject and its relevance to the world outside the institutional gates has never been more pressing' (Rawling, 1993, p. 114).

Indeed, Catling has suggested that geography teachers premise their work on the following principles:

1. 'widening children's awareness, knowledge and understanding of the way the world works, its physical and human processes;
2. developing children's experience and effectiveness in thinking, understanding, imaging and imagining, feeling and doing;
3. engaging children in the skills of graphicacy, enquiry, creativity, tackling problems, concern and action for others;
4. encouraging children in a sense of community responsibility, environmental stewardship and an international understanding focused upon global responsibility.
5. fostering in children the desire for and the capacity to fashion a better world for all people' (Catling, 1993, p. 340).

The examples outlined in 'Possible classroom agendas' are designed with these five points in mind, particularly points 4 and 5. However, as will be argued, there is a need to move beyond Catling's (1993) call for a geography that recognises cultural diversity and the 'richness of humanity' to a position which explores the role of space and place in reproducing social relations: a need to move beyond essentialist and imperialist based notions of difference.

Introducing Others

Over the past 15 years or so, new critical geographies have emerged which have sought to understand how society is socio-spatially produced. Drawing on the work of post-modernists and feminists, in particular, research has sought to identify the processes of domination and resistance, the power relations which structure individual and institutional behaviour, and detail ways in which knowledge and society are produced and constructed. Making explicit links to cultural politics, critical geographers have called upon geography to re-examine its modernist and essentialist underpinnings and to reconceptualise society and its workings. This has led to a re-engagement with some Marxist concerns of social exclusion and social justice. However, whereas Marxist theory contextualised such concerns within the strictures of capitalist production, new critical geographies recognise that while capital and class do play a significant role in shaping social relations, social organisation is more complex. Class, whilst important, is only one axis of oppression within society with disability, gender, race, sexuality, religious beliefs and nationality providing the context in which other power relations operate: there are multiple, interacting fields of power (Pile, 1997). As such, there has been an emphasis on studying the various peoples that make up society and deconstructing the cultural ideologies which regulate the interplay between these groups. It is suggested that society is organised into a series of nested social hierarchies, with differing groups 'othering' and maintaining power relations over other groups. Others, then, are a group of people who are perceived to be different, inferior and less deserving than another group. The relationships between groups can be complex and entangled with one group being an Other for one set of people while themselves othering another group. In contemporary

Western society Others include people from ethnic minorities, disabled people, gay people, women, homeless people, poor people, old people, and gypsies and travellers.

Critical geographic research has generally sought to identify the socio-spatial processes of exclusion and oppression these groups generally face and the distinct spatialities which arise out of exclusionary practices. At the heart of these new geographies is the notion that society and spaces are socially constructed. As such, race, gender, disability and sexuality are not essentialist categories, they are constructed by individuals to categorise and make sense of the world. We know this from observing how different groups have been treated by society throughout history and how different peoples are accepted and rejected around the world. For example, evidence has shown that different societies do react differently to impairment. Winzer (1993), for example, provides a detailed account of disability from pre-Christian to the eighteenth century. Within these civilisations disability was conceptualised as a tragic flaw measured against some ideal, and while disabled people were victimised they were still visible members of the community (Finkelstein, 1993). It was only after the mid-nineteenth century that the concept of normality underlay conceptions of disability and disabled people became less visible in the social landscape (Davis, 1995). It has only been in the last few decades that disability has been seen as a social construct and not just as a medical condition.

Exclusion, then, rests on the basis of perceived differences based upon certain characteristics. People are laden with assigned meanings and placed into stereotypical categories. We all have notions of what certain people represent based upon what we are taught to associate with certain groups. These representations are constructed from our partial knowledge of these people, gained through social mediation and the media. Difference is uncertainty, the unknown, something to be wary of. As such, it is easier to ignore or exclude these people than it is to come to know them, to dispel the uncertainty, especially when deep-seated, historical prejudices exist. Indeed, Sibley (1995) suggests that people naturally form groupings in order to try and protect each other from perceived threats. As such, groups try to maintain social hierarchies and maintain their position within such hierarchies by excluding Others: to deny difference and try and enforce homogeneity and reproduce current social relations. Space and place are central to understanding these exclusionary practices.

The role of space and place

'We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology' (Soja, 1989, p. 6).

Forms of oppression are played out within, and given context by, spaces and places. This section uses the example of disability to illustrate socio-spatial processes of othering and the distinct spatialities that work to exclude and oppress disabled people. Spaces are currently organised to keep disabled people 'in their place' and places written to convey to disabled people that they are 'out of place'. Furthermore, social relations currently work to spatially isolate and marginalise disabled people and their carers. Disability is socio-spatially constructed. Whilst some of the processes of exclusion experienced by disabled people are unique, the arguments put forward here can easily be applied to other groups and a useful exercise is to explore such an application. Within the discussion it is recognised that space is not just conceived as a container of objects but also as an active agent of change. Space is not only given, 'an absolute container of static, though movable, objects and dynamic flows of behaviour' (Gleeson, 1996, p. 390), absolutely defined and understood with Euclidean geometry, space is also socially produced and constructed, dynamic and ambiguous, claimed and contested (see Wolch and Dear, 1989).

Who is felt to belong or not belong in a place has important implications for the shaping of social space (Sibley, 1995). We live and interact in spaces that are ascribed meaning and convey meaning. Our lives are affected through both the writing and organisation of space which are expressions of power. In relation to disability, it can be argued that places are written to exclude disabled people:

'Good inclusive design will send positive messages to disabled people, messages which tell them: "you are important"; "we want you here"; and "welcome" ... if the way that disabled people are expected to get into a building is round the back, past the bins and through the kitchens, what does that message communicate? How will it make a disabled person feel?' (Napolitano, 1995, p. 33).

Here, an urban landscape is not just a set of buildings, roads, parks and other infrastructure,

the landscape is also a (cultural) text which we read and react to (Donald, 1992). Spatial structures and places within the landscape provide a set of cultural signifiers that tell us if we are 'out of place' (Cresswell, 1996). These can be explicit (e.g. murals identifying the political affiliations within Northern Ireland or graffiti marking out gangland territory in US cities) or implicit in nature (e.g. the type and appearance of housing). We read the symbolic meanings of landscape to indicate to us how to act. For example, we know that a place of worship symbolises reverence, a library silence. Through social and cultural practices we are taught how to read and react to the cultural landscape (see Duncan and Ley, 1993). In doing so, we are indoctrinated into perpetuating and reproducing the meanings and messages that spaces convey. This in turn leads to distinct spatialities such as the concentration of certain minority groups within areas of the city (e.g. Black ghettos, gay enclaves). In effect, certain spaces are socialised by certain homogeneous groups who regulate and exclude 'unwelcome' visitors. Social spaces, as found in any city, are contested through processes of domination and resistance.

As Cresswell illustrates with phrases such as 'know your place' and 'a place for everything and everything in its place' (Cresswell, 1996), some things and some people are determined to belong in one place and not in another, depending on their relationship to Others. When people are out of place it is a cause for concern because of the perceived threat to power relations. Many comic films feed on this person out of place situation (e.g. *Trading Places* where a down-and-out and a city trader swap lifestyles). One way to ensure people know their place is through the creation of cultural norms and identifiable social spaces; for people to be indoctrinated into 'knowing their place' through cultural practice and taught how to read cultural landscapes. For example, the majority of us experience guilt or apprehension when we know we are somewhere we should not be, like hiding in our parent's bedroom or sneaking into the boss's office. Moreover, most of us feel uncomfortable or threatened when someone from a different level within the social hierarchy strays uninvited into our space, such as when a person with a mental illness moves into our neighbourhood. Such anxieties have been well documented in relation to community care (see Dear and Wolch, 1987; Currie *et al.*, 1989). Here, we are reacting to place-inscribed ideologies that guide our thinking and behaviour.

Imrie (1996) contends that space as well as being written to keep disabled people 'in their place' is also organised to perpetuate the dominance of 'able-bodied' people. He argues that environments that exclude disabled people are rarely 'natural', they are produced through individual social interactions combined with State policy, building regulations, and architectural and planning practice. Barriers to inclusion are clearly evident in the urban environment. Urban space is implicitly and explicitly designed in such a way as to render certain spaces 'no go' areas. For example, implicit or thoughtless designs include the use of steps with no ramp; cash machines being placed too high; places linked by inaccessible public transport. Such practices are enshrined in, and perpetuated by, the planning system. Current planning practice is underlain by modernist concerns for aesthetics and form over building use with environments and buildings designed as if all people are the same. The current car-designed city is ill-suited to disabled people reliant on public and local authority transport, with the changing retail geography (e.g. out-of-town shopping centres) exacerbating the problems of shopping access. Even when a space is designed for disabled access it is often misused, with disabled toilets becoming stores and obstacles positioned so as to block accessible entrances (see Napolitano, 1995). This has led Imrie (1996) to suggest that current urban planning is underscribed by a 'design apartheid' whereby planners, architects and building control officers are guilty of constructing spaces which 'lock' disabled people out; which prioritise the dominant values of the 'able-bodied' community.

Some spaces are explicitly designed to segregate and 'protect' the public from disabled people and *vice versa*. For example, people with mental, physical and sensory impairments have been encouraged and forced to live in different spatial spheres. Segregated schools are still commonplace (although there has been a move towards integration) and segregated employment training and day-care units are not uncommon. Even within public spaces, disabled people are deliberately separated and marginalised to the peripheries. For example, where there are disabled-accessible public toilets they are mostly separate from able-bodied toilets, asexual (both sexes share the same space), and usually locked – whereas the able-bodied can visit the toilet at any time, disabled people often have to search for the key (sometimes held in an inaccessible part of the building!). Theatres generally restrict wheelchair users to certain areas within the auditorium,

usually towards the back or the side. Imrie (1996) argues that segregation, whilst promoted as a way to help assimilate disabled people in society through empowerment and independence, perpetuates disablism by labelling disabled people as different, as needing specialised and segregated facilities. Segregation thus propagates and reproduces the position and status of disabled people. As such, popular misconceptions concerning disabled people are reproduced.

In addition to disablism organisation of space, the organisation of social relations currently spatially isolates and marginalises disabled people and their carers. A classic example of how society spatially disadvantages disabled people is the design and maintenance of public transport. Many disabled people are denied the freedom to travel where and when they like. Their spatial behaviour is restricted because they have reduced incomes, are unable to walk or drive themselves, and public transport is either poorly designed or there is inadequate provision (e.g. infrequent or unreliable services). Often journeys have to be planned several days in advance, to allow time to book provision. For example, it is not possible for wheelchair users to travel on the London underground without pre-booking 24 hours in advance, and then travel is restricted to stations with a lift. Disabled people often have to travel circuitous routes and are denied the same spatial choices as 'able-bodied' people. Consequently, access to employment and social events can be denied. The spatial manifestations of inaccessible public transport reproduces unemployment and under-employment amongst disabled people, and restricts their social activities. This in turn restricts the ability to earn and thus confines them to poor, cheap and inadequate housing and welfarist lifestyles.

In cases where welfare provision is an essential part of daily life, and institutionalisation has been rejected, social relations currently place an emphasis on authority-provided care or family care with little or no support. Authority-provided care usually consists of 'helpers' coming several times a week to help with household chores such as cooking and cleaning. Usually visits are timetabled and set to a routine. Spatial behaviour is restricted to modes of travel provided by the authority and is limited both in time and distance. Trips outside the home usually have to be timetabled carefully in advance. Where a family member is the main carer, inadequate and infrequent support can place an intolerable burden upon the carer and severely restrict their own and their disabled caree's spatial behaviour.

Milligan (1997), in a study of the geographies of caring within Glasgow, has shown that carers are tethered to the site of caring, especially if they are the sole carer, with little time for social life. Spatial behaviour is usually restricted to walking distance of the site of care, or short car journeys to specific locations such as shops. In addition, provision of relief support by local authorities varies across districts because of priorities and patterns of spending. Where people live, then, affects the level and extent of carer support.

Cresswell describes how places reproduce the meanings associated with them, and the ways in which spaces are organised are reproduced in natural, self-evident and common-sense ways. For example:

'we are silent in a library because we believe it is appropriate to be silent in libraries, and by being silent in libraries we contribute to the continuation of silence' (Cresswell, 1996, p. 16).

Therefore, these cultural norms are situated and contextualised within a historical legacy so that society is reproduced and perpetuated (although there is fluidity so that norms do gradually change and evolve). As such, exclusionary practices such as inaccessible environments are unconsciously reproduced as something which is natural, which is common-sense. He suggests that the majority of the population are generally unaware of the processes of exclusion; they are an unconscious part of everyday life. In other words, able-bodied conceptions of the world are unconsciously accepted with disabled perspectives little considered. As a result, the socio-spatial system is reproduced with little challenge. Cresswell refers to this as *doxa* (dominant ideology), an unconscious acceptance, or the taken-for-granted, way of things (even by the oppressed group). Social ordering is thus legitimised through a 'natural' or 'common-sense' classification where exclusionary practices are understood as acceptable. People come to 'know their place'. Freire (1970) suggests that this dominant ideology is largely invisible to the oppressed group because their perceptions of themselves are submerged in the reality of oppression. Oppression is not only common-sense it is 'domesticating'. Socio-spatial relations are thus ordered and maintained through the dominant ideology.

The ideological messages to disabled people that are inscribed in space through the use of segregationist planning and inaccessible environments are clear – 'you are out of place', 'you are different'. As a result, forms of oppression and

their use within ideologies leads to distinct spatialities with the creation of landscapes of exclusion, the boundaries of which are reinforced through a combination of the popularising of cultural representations and the creation of myths. Cultural representations are employed by the dominant society in order to portray Other. Commonly, analogies to things considered to be 'bad' are used. For example, Others are often portrayed as being impure, defiled, contaminated or dirty. This is achieved through processes which seek to de-humanise the subordinate group (see Jackson, 1989; Pratt and Hanson, 1994). For example, Nazi Germany used popularised cultural representations to argue that the Jews and Gypsies, along with both physically and mentally impaired people, were dirty, animals, contaminated, physically different and imperfect, thus threatening the purity and stability of the Aryan race, to motivate widespread persecution of these groups. Feeding into and from cultural representations are cultural myths. Myths take the form of malicious gossip which feeds into stereotypical representations.

Disabled people have long been labelled as deviant, as Other. Their position within society has been greatly affected by the production and perpetuation of cultural representations and cultural myths. These have been fed in the main by their 'deviancy' from the 'normal' and their supposed inferiority and danger. Disabled people are 'freaks of nature' deemed to be abnormal, unproductive, unattractive, anti-social and tainted by disease/ill-health. They are labelled with monster images and their ability to carry out the most mundane of tasks questioned (Hahn, 1988). Disabled people, regardless of impairment, are often labelled 'retarded', unable to cope on their own. They are the charity cases, reliant on hand-outs and hand-ups; the hangers-on (from death), ungodly and unsightly. As Hevey (1993) discusses, media images reinforce these notions of disabled people as ignorant, child-like, hyperdependent and flawed. Segregationist practices further heighten fear and suspicion. When disabled people do live independently they are thought of as the 'plucky hero/heroine', defying their impairment and natural selection. When they marry and have children, the able-bodied partner or the child is pitied and the disabled partner/parent often condemned for transgressive and irresponsible behaviour. Such is the stigma of the disability label that many disabled people deny or seek to hide their impairment. Within these representations and myths disability is constructed as a medical and

individual problem – disabled people are just the tragic victims of nature (birth) or fate (accident, disease, etc.). As such, society is absolved of blame and guilt for disablist practices. The representations of, and myths surrounding, disability are socio-spatial constructions. They are specific methods for keeping disabled people 'in their place'. Conceptions of disability are rooted in specific socio-spatial and temporal structures. These structures form, sustain and perpetuate the popular stereotypes which underlie many exclusionary practices and are enshrined within the maintenance of dominant ideologies.

Possible classroom agendas

The discussion, so far, has introduced the concept of Other and highlighted current thoughts concerning the socio-spatial processes that underlies exclusion within society using the example of disability. In this section, how these ideas might be conveyed within a classroom or project based work are highlighted using three related themes.

i. Exploring socio-spatial constructions of difference

As discussed, the perceived differences between groups are not essentialist but are socially constructed in order to maintain power relations between social hierarchies. Perceived differences are underpinned by a complex set of cultural ideologies which are historically grounded and well developed. However, despite skin colour, sex, sexuality, impairment or cultural practices there are no 'natural' or essential differences between people that make some people inferior or less deserving than others. All people have the same intrinsic value and should be treated and valued in the same way. There is a need within the education system to expose cultural ideologies and demonstrate the bases of stereotypical constructions used to mark, and delineate, people as different. This involves the development of a mutual understanding of cultural diversity but an understanding that is based upon constructed not essentialist difference.

Within geography this can be achieved by highlighting and exposing the importance of space and place in maintaining and reproducing current social relations. For example, our discussion of disability can be extended to other groups and questions concerning various forms of

socio-spatial oppression can be explored. Why are Black people treated differently from their Caucasian counterparts? Is space arranged and managed by Caucasian people in such a manner as to exclude Black people? To what extent are Black people denied access to sites of production (e.g. work) and consumption (e.g. shops) because of their skin colour? Clearly there is the potential to explore personal experiences within the classroom and, given the multicultural nature of society, to examine the multiplicity of voices and sites of knowledge. Some children will be oppressed and others oppressors – most (all) will have experiences of both domination and resistance, of being picked-upon or bullied, and the associated spatial consequences such as the organisation of the playground into divided spaces and the need to find alternative routes home to avoid bullying. Through the examination of personal experiences, images portrayed through the media, and practical-based classroom exercises such as interpreting photographs, the complex socio-spatial processes of exclusion, and their maintenance and reproduction, can be revealed.

ii. Exploring spatial manifestations of difference

Constructions of difference have distinct residential and travel spatialities. It is not uncommon to find significant spatial concentrations of specific groups across a city. Most Western cities have areas with high concentrations of specific ethnic groups. For example, Smith (1988) reports that within Britain 43 per cent of the Black and 26 per cent of the Indian population live in the inner-city compared to just 6 per cent of the White population. Further, Black households are disproportionately situated in the most deprived districts, and the majority of Black families live in below-average housing conditions. Research has also shown that other less 'visible' groups such as gay men also concentrate into specific locales (Castells, 1983). At present, school-based geography explains such concentrations through modernist thinking relating to essentialist cultural difference, simple push-pull economics and personal decision making. Such an approach fits well with traditional geographical analyses of difference often framed within a spatial-sociological perspective (Jackson, 1987). Studies within this approach have concentrated upon mapping and describing patterns of segregation, with explanations often based within choice and constraint models. Theoretical explanations of segregation within

this approach are weak, relatively unsophisticated and centred on notions of assimilation, failing to acknowledge the social and political dimensions of exclusion. As Smith (1988) demonstrates in relation to race, however, housing and employment policies in Britain have more to do with constructed racial stereotyping and racism within government agencies than individual, rational choices by immigrants. She notes that Black people with the same education and jobs as White counterparts live in poorer housing; Black people are more likely to be allocated to the worst estates, and are more likely to be allocated to flats than White counterparts; within flats they are more likely to be located on the upper floors. There is little evidence that Black people 'choose' to live together and without evidence such claims are racist in nature, legitimising and perpetuating segregation. Essentialist teaching helps to forward racial segregation as a social norm so that social boundaries are seen as a value-free cultural choice rather than enforced or constrained by specific policies. The urban geography of residential segregation is complex and constructed through historically-grounded social stereotyping. The complexity of constructed spatialities should be exposed within the school curriculum.

As noted in relation to disability, spatial behaviour can be restricted because of inaccessible environments or the lack of accessible public transport. Other groups also alter their travel patterns to fit expected social norms or because of fear or anxiety caused by being 'out of place'. For example, women often have constrained patterns of spatial behaviour in relation to men. Women generally travel less distance to work (which is often part-time, low-skilled, low-waged) and have travel patterns centred around the home, local shops and their children's school. Within Northern Ireland the travel patterns of Catholics and Protestants were radically altered by the start of the recent troubles, 25 years ago (Boal, 1969). Both communities now actively avoid travelling through 'hostile' areas which are predominantly occupied by the other community and often will not apply for jobs in the other's area (Shuttleworth *et al.*, 1995).

Students should be encouraged to think about, reflect upon and discuss their own experiences and observations of residential segregation and travel patterns. In addition, students could be asked to imagine what it might be like to be a member of a different group and to detail what sort of area they would live in and why. Alternatively, they could be asked a series of questions about Others coming to live on their

street. For example, they could be asked how someone who was 'different' would be treated if they moved in to their street. Would it make any difference if the person was from a professional background and was a doctor or a lawyer? Practical work could involve students studying a time-series of residential patterns for particular groups and trying to explain why such groupings occur and why they move through space over time. Similarly, students could be shown the space-time diagram of a woman and a man and asked to discuss why these might be different, or presented with the daily travel patterns of two groups (such as Catholics and Protestants) and asked to detail the differences, and why these differences might exist. Another approach might be to ask students to draw space-time diagrams for their parents and to assess the two patterns. These sorts of tasks are designed to initiate wider thinking about diversity and difference, but also how society is structured and works.

iii. Exploring social justice

'Questions of social justice, ethics and morality are normative, concerned with what should be, as opposed to positive knowledge which is about what actually exists' (Smith, 1994, p. 2).

Geography, as both a school and academic enterprise, tends to avoid questions about whether something is good or bad, right or wrong. As such, it often avoids questions of social justice. Justice means to treat fairly. It specifically relates to the more general problem of morality, or how people should act. Here, we are in the area of normative ethics: the attempt to discover some acceptable and rational views concerning what is good and what is right. Social justice relates to the fair and equitable distribution of things that people care about such as work, wealth, food and housing, plus less tangible phenomena such as systems of power and pathways of opportunity (Smith, 1994). In general then, social justice concerns human rights. A right is an 'obligation embedded in some social or institutional context where expectation has a moral force' (Smith, 1994, p. 36). In other words, moral rights are those things that we as members of a society expect as members. In our society it includes things such as freedom of expression, choice, access to accommodation, to vote in elections, full recourse to the law, access to education and medical treatment, etc. Rights are also a 'grey' or contested area, as highlighted by many contemporary

debates: should single mothers receive priority treatment for housing?; should gays be allowed to have sex before 18?; should the government's laws on immigrants seeking asylum be changed?; should certain drugs be legalised?; should there be full disability legislation?; and so on.

As detailed, social injustice has distinct spatialities. Moreover, social injustice is socially produced through a controlling and domination of space. The main argument presented in this article is that the nature of these social injustices should be highlighted to students. The sorts of exercises already discussed need to be supplemented with questions concerning whether such arrangements are just or morally right. As Smith (1994) details, there are many different theories of social justice and students should be exposed to the different ways in which we can conceptualise a fair and just society (Table 1). Students should be encouraged to explore questions concerning how they would feel and how they would want society to change if they belonged to one of these groups; if they were discriminated. Many students, will of course, be able to directly relate to social exclusion as they are members of an excluded group. These students should be encouraged to think about why they are being excluded, what they feel would be a just society, and possible strategies of resistance.

Table 1
Theories of social justice

1. Egalitarianism argues for equality in terms of distribution of wealth and power across all members of a society regardless of ability and inheritance.
2. Utilitarianism seeks the greater good for the greatest number.
3. Libertarianism prioritises the value of the individual over the state and society and suggests that the free market is inherently just.
4. Contractarianism seeks to find a distributional arrangement of resources that all involved consider just (not equal).
5. Marxism argues that society has to be restructured away from its current capitalist base into a society where the full value of an individual's contribution is rewarded.
6. Communitarianism promotes the ideas of community, and community ways of life with common shared practices and shared understandings.
7. Feminism argues for the redistribution of power, so that power relations between different groups becomes more just.

Conclusion

There is a need within the national curriculum to recognise and incorporate new, academic ideas within geography. In particular, the ideas stemming from post-modernist, post-structuralist and feminist thought concerning non-essentialist notions of cultural identity need to be addressed. One way to address these concerns is through the examination of Others and the role of space and place in the maintaining and reproducing processes of social exclusion. Indeed, given the multicultural nature of Western society and the tensions that exist between different groups, there is a need to go beyond essentialist and imperialist notions of Other to explore the socio-spatial constructiveness of society; to move beyond stereotypical cultural representations. It is clear that socio-spatial organisation and messages contained within the landscape significantly shape social life. As geographers we should be engaged with trying to understand the social consequences of space and also addressing normative questions relating to social justice.

The classroom exercises described in this article are designed to stimulate students to think about socially relevant, real-world contemporary issues, many of which affect their lives; to get students to think about the way that society works, the power relations that exist, and how the world is spatially organised to reproduce current social relations. It is argued that the developments within human geography over the past 15 years or so represent exciting new times, exploring stimulating and socially relevant questions. These questions should be reflected in school-based teaching.

Notes

1. There are differences between people and these differences are 'natural' and given – 'systematic social differences automatically and inevitably follow the ... lines of physical, [mental and sexual] differentiation' (Jackson, 1989, p. 132). It is nature and not historically-grounded social circumstance that determines a person's social position.
2. The term 'geographies' is used, as opposed to just 'geography', to suggest that there is no one geography, some essentialist truth that is just waiting to be collected. Knowledge is produced by its authors and therefore there are many geographies, many ways of seeing and interpreting the world, dependent upon your viewpoint.

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