Also by Amanda Wise
EXILE AND RETURN AMONG THE EAST TIMORESE

Also by Selvaraj Velayutham
RESPONDING TO GLOBALISATION: Nation, Culture and Identity in Singapore
TAMIL CINEMA: The Cultural Politics of India’s Other Film Industry (edited)
DISSENT AND CULTURAL RESISTANCE IN ASIAN CITIES (co-edited)

Everyday Multiculturalism

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Introduction: Multiculturalism and Everyday Life

Amanda Wise and Selvaraj Velayutham

The food court of our local suburban shopping mall is deliciously rich with everyday multicultural encounters. We live in a suburb where more than 70 languages are spoken and on a typical day a good portion of these can be heard in this food court. The food stalls include an Indian place run by Tamil speakers from South India who’ve modified their menu to encompass more North Indian dishes because most of the international students living nearby are Punjabis. Next door is a Thai place popular with everyone, and next to them a Chinese buffet, a sandwich shop owned by Chinese, a Turkish kebab house, and the usual big fast-food outlets. There is a distinct temporal rhythm to the space. On weekdays one length of tables are occupied by a group of ten or so elderly Italian men who meet there each morning to talk, debate, play cards, and generally while away the time. They buy their coffee from the Italian-themed coffee shop owned and run by local Chinese immigrants. Large-screen TVs hanging above hum with the sound of Oprah or the news. The tables in the middle are occupied by a few elderly white men (we suspect widowers living alone), usually with a cup of coffee and a newspaper. Typically they’ll be sitting alone but apparently enjoying the light-touch company of others occupying this public space. There is a soup kitchen up the road so there are often homeless men occupying tables near the TVs and we’ve seen the Chinese coffee shop owners give free coffee and cake to a couple of them who come regularly. Cleaning the tables are Filipinas and our Greek neighbour who stops by our table for a chat as she cleans. Iraqi and Sudanese refugees collect runaway shopping trolleys for the big supermarket chains. Serving at the KFC counter are international students from India and China working part-time to pay for their studies. After school, Indian, Pacific Islander, Sri Lankan, Filipina, Portuguese, Polish, Lebanese, Korean, Italian, Anglo
and Chinese mums and kids stop in for a bite to eat and there are as many culturally mixed families as ‘single-ethnicity’ ones. Wednesday is old-age pension day and the Anglo ladies come out en masse dressed in their best to treat themselves to lunch. Weekday lunchtimes see crowds of public servants who drop in from their nearby office building. All these groups rub along mostly peacefully but there are myriad stories to tell about the interminglings and encounters present there. It can be a site of conviviality, of light-touch rubbing along, of competition for space, everyday racism and cross-cultural discomforts, of consumption, of inter-ethnic exchange and hybridity, encounter and hospitality (Wise 2004). Far from mundane, its everydayness offers a rich array of interpretive possibility for understanding how it is we live with difference and how the mundane is experienced and is mediated by commercial, aesthetic, discursive and ideational threads big and small.

This book gathers together a collection of chapters that represent a small but growing field of scholarship that we term ‘everyday multiculturalism’. Multiculturalism has traditionally been talked about from a top-down perspective as a set of policies concerned with the management and containment of diversity by nation states, with a typical focus on group-based rights and cultural maintenance, multicultural service provision, multicultural education, and attendant legislation (Kivisto 2002). The theoretical literature is dominated by macro-theoretical approaches to multicultural citizenship, the recognition of groups and distribution of group rights (Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 1995; Parekh 2000) and theories of border-making and identity construction (Nederveen Pieterse 2007; Fortier 2008). However, none of these literatures deal adequately with the everyday lived reality of cultural difference in super-diverse (Vertovec 2006) cities and spaces. The everyday multiculturalism perspective on the other hand explores how cultural diversity is experienced and negotiated on the ground in everyday situations. Some sub-themes of interest within this perspective include; habitus and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), embodiment, reciprocity, gift exchange and social solidarity (Mauss 1969, Komter 2005), affect and the senses (Rodaway 1994; Stoller 1989, 1997; Wise 2009a), humour (Billig 2005), everyday cultural exchange and transformation, everyday disjunctures and affinities (Wise 2005; 2004; 2009), cultural hybridities and ‘togetherness-in-difference’ (Ang 2001 and 2003), everyday racism and tensions (Noble 2005, Essed 1991), civility and incivility (Noble 2005, 2007), networks and gift exchange (Wise, Chapter 1 in this collection), material culture and consumption (Appadurai 1988, Miller 2001) – and how relations of power and wider discourses and politics interplay through all of these (Hage 2000). These encounters vary from context to context – from the workplace, to school, neighbourhood streets to public transport or parks. Some involve intimate and sustained encounters, others are more fleeting. Some involve voluntary, others involuntary, contact with difference. Despite this diversity, the common thread is that these encounters occur in ordinary spaces and situations in the ebb and flow of daily life. It is a field which builds upon the longstanding tradition of sociology of everyday life which includes a focus on ethno-methodology, dramaturgy, everyday social order and rituals, social interactionism and the sociology of emotions. Scholars such as Simmel (1971), Elias (2000), Goffman (1967), Garfinkel (1967), Berger and Luckman (1967) and Schutz (1970) exemplify this tradition. Rich though this tradition is, this collection extends beyond the often Eurocentric and ‘colour-blind’ approach of these sociologists to explore their application in terms of diversity and interaction among the culturally different.

For our purposes, we define everyday multiculturalism as a grounded approach to looking at the everyday practice and lived experience of diversity in specific situations and spaces of encounter. It explores how social actors experience and negotiate cultural difference on the ground and how their social relations and identities are shaped and re-shaped in the process. While the focus is on the micro-sociology of everyday interaction, the everyday multiculturalism perspective does not exclude wider social, cultural and political processes. Indeed, the key to the everyday multiculturalism approach is to understand how these wider structures and discourses filter through to the realm of everyday practice, exchange and meaning making, and vice versa. Methodologically speaking, the everyday multiculturalism approach can be broadly defined as an ethnographically oriented approach drawing on the sociology of everyday life.

Everyday multiculturalism in the literature

While this is the first collection to focus specifically on the theme, everyday multiculturalism has appeared under different guises in a range of literature in recent years. A number of scholars have begun to explore the ethical dimensions of ‘everyday mixing’. Hage, for example, suggests that multiculturalism has too often been cast as a formal doctrine of white tolerance and tool for managing and containing difference. It is, in his view, middle-class whites who do the ‘tolerating’ and for whom a cosmopolitan
consumption of difference becomes a form of cultural capital. These he calls ‘cosmo-multiculturals’ (1997) or ‘white cosmopolites’ (1998: 201) who, for example, can typically be found eating and admiring ‘ethnic cuisines’ and ‘culture’ as a means of acquiring and displaying cultural capital, while having little in the way of real, day-to-day inhabited interaction with ‘ethnic others’ and their mundane modes of migrant home building (1997: 145).

Along with Hage, Stratton (1998) was one of the earlier writers to describe ‘everyday multiculturals’, although he conceptualises it rather more narrowly than we do. Stratton argues that the ‘everyday’ has been narrativised in film and television as a counterpoint to official multiculturalism. However he suggests that its popular rendering has not been an entirely innocent ideal. In his view, this idealised everyday multiculturalism is a discourse which sets up an emphasis on individual personalities and interactions – rather than ethnic groups – against a backdrop of a taken-for-granted dominant culture paradigm which includes at the edges acceptable aspects of difference but only through a racialised hierarchy where a lack of visible difference and ability to speak English are the paradigms through which inclusion is represented (1998: 206). Drawing on Levinas, Stratton calls for a more ethical invocation of the everyday which resists objectification of difference and which evolves out of a recognition and experience of marginalisation. For Stratton, this is something akin to Young’s notion of creolisation, a process whereby two or more cultures merge into one (1998: 16).

The ‘ordinary cosmopolitan’ may be said to exist in this realm. Pnina Werbner identifies what she terms the ‘working-class cosmopolitan’ (1999) through her research with Pakistani Muslims. She counters the prevailing stereotype of elite cosmopolitanism through her description of one transnational Pakistani’s expanding intercultural competence acquired through his employment on a diverse worksite in the Arabian Gulf. Her research subject Hajji Suleiman – a Punjabi-speaking Pakistani labour migrant – became conversant with the cultural mores of his Japanese employers in the Gulf, and the ‘the customs, habits and idiosyncrasies of Hindus, Bangladeshis, Arabs and Iraqis’ (1999: 24) with whom he worked. He was also enmeshed within a transnational network of Pakistani, Turkish and Arab Sufis and began to learn Dutch to enable him to promote his religion in Holland.

These cosmopolitan encounters involve ways of talking about and negotiating cultural difference. In their groundbreaking study comparing forms of cross-cultural interaction and talk among North African workers in France with white Frenchmen, and between black and white American working-class men, Lamont and Aksartova (2002: 2) describe ordinary cosmopolitanism as the strategies everyday people use to bridge racial and ethnic difference. Like Hage, they counterpose upper-middle-class cosmopolitans – who ‘appreciate’ cultural difference and acquire this disposition as a form of cultural capital – with ‘ordinary cosmopolitans’. They argue that more research needs to be done to explore how ordinary people do ‘boundary work’ in everyday life, both drawing and overcoming boundaries. They were interested in exploring the everyday rhetorics that non-college-educated black and white workers draw on to counteract racism (2002: 1). Their study found distinct national patterns to the ‘everyday talk’ used to bridge cultural difference. French workers tended to draw on discourses of solidarity and egalitarianism to establish racial equivalence, while workers in the US tended to privilege discourses of meritocracy and socioeconomic success to describe what makes races equal.

The ideal of ‘mixing’ embodied in notions of everyday or vernacular cosmopolitanism has been increasingly subject to policy attention. In the UK in particular, the community cohesion agenda has promoted the ideal of neighbourly mixing as a means of tackling racism and problematic race divides. The agenda has been driven forward as a result of reflections upon race riots in the 1990s and early 2000s and the London train bombings (Cantle 2001; Modood 2007). The UK government commissioned several large studies to investigate the causes of these racial tensions and develop strategies to counter them. One resulting report, The End of Parallel Lives? (Cantle 2004), argued that racially different Britons lead largely ‘parallel lives’ with little interaction or relationships across ethnic boundaries. Cantle argues that the multicultural model has until now been too focused on the maintenance of cultural difference but has not paid enough attention to producing relationships across cultural difference, leading to a situation where tensions can fester without a solid relational base to counter them. Despite its popularity in government circles, the Cantle Report (2004), as it has become known, has been subject to criticism for ‘blaming’ disadvantaged British South Asian communities for ‘not mixing’ and ‘ethnic residential clustering’, whereas white Britons who choose to live in predominantly suburban white areas are not subject to the same critique (Phillips 2006: 29). Phillips argues that Cantle’s reading of the Oldham, Burnley and Bradford riots overemphasised the supposed desire for self-segregation on the part of British South Asians and a lack of willingness to ‘mix’ across difference as a causal factor for the riots. She suggests that the lack of opportunity to mix across difference was as much to do with economic disadvantage...
and persistent experiences of structural and popular racism from the white community (Phillips 2006: 28). Others have critiqued the idea that simply placing groups into a ‘contact’ situation is a panacea, as it does not address the power differentials involved, and indeed can make tensions worse. As Valentine points out, ‘contact’ is often stressful for minorities who have experienced histories of exclusion and discrimination. Even where the cross-cultural contact is civil and courteous, this does not necessarily translate to a respect for difference or signal any shift in private attitudes to otherness (Valentine 2008).

Stemming from a recognition that contact in itself does not always suggest positive intercultural relations, Noble has argued we need a better means of conceptualising modes of everyday recognition (Noble 2008). While theories of recognition exist (cf. Taylor 1994; Parekh 2000; Honneth), he suggests that there is a need to focus empirically on the messy realm of everyday intermingling and explore what it means to ‘do recognition’. In particular, he was interested in exploring what kinds of encounters are experienced as forms of positive recognition by diverse young people in everyday situations. His research with Arabic-speaking youth has shown that it is often non-recognition that is valued by minority youth. That is, non-recognition in the sense that it is not always ethnicity that young people feel defines their identity. Indeed, objectification in terms of a single ethnicity is often experienced as a kind of ‘boxing in’, which excludes other identities felt to be more important, such as age, subculture, gender and so forth. He argues that everyday recognition involves recognising others in their full humanity, rather than as representatives of a particular category. Issues of legitimacy and competence overlap here in complex ways, for example situated social competency and legitimacy afforded through its recognition.

*Hybrid identities* are a common outcome of intense cross cultural encounters. Ang (2001) suggests that mundane cross-cultural encounters such as exchanging tips on what fish to buy, or discussing the origins and uses of particular vegetables in the fruit market, can actually lead to an ‘incremental and dialogic construction of lived identities…[and] as subjects from multiple backgrounds negotiate their social co-existence and their mutual entanglement…the global and local interpenetrate one another’ (2001: 159). Identities resulting from everyday intermingling can also be deployed strategically. In their study of Arabic-speaking youth in Sydney, Noble et al. (1999) found that because Lebanese boys were the dominant ethnic group among the Arabic-speaking communities in the schools they studied, boys from other Arabic-speaking backgrounds such as Syrian often strategically presented themselves as Lebanese and both groups slipped between a strategic essentialism which emphasised Lebanese ethnicity, and a strategic youth-culture-based hybridity.

Urban sociology has a long history of engagement with issues of race in urban contexts. The Chicago School (and those who followed) is the most obvious reference point. However in recent years human geographers have begun to engage with issues of multicultural encounter in everyday shared places. Thrift (2008: 218–9), for example, has argued that spaces of mundane encounter involving relations of kindness and compassion represent a sense of hopefulness and democratic resource. Similar arguments have been made by Amin (2002) who suggests ‘micro-publics’ such as schools, youth centres and sporting teams offer opportunities for engaged intercultural intermingling because they involve prosaic negotiations with difference and often banal transgressions across ethnic boundaries (Amin 2002: 15). Watson’s *City Publics* (2006) is one of the more extended explorations of everyday multicultural encounter in ordinary city spaces. Through a series of ethnographic studies she explores how difference is negotiated and performed and how power works in mundane shared spaces such as street markets, local parks and children’s playgrounds. She argues that we need to recognise that those almost ‘invisible’ marginal places are as important as the formal public spaces more typically discussed in the grand narrative of cosmopolitan contact (Watson 2006: 173). She suggests that the point is not to develop an overarching narrative of ‘what it means to live with difference’ but to explore the micro-spaces of contact which reveal much more complex and contradictory relations of inclusion, exclusion and agonistic negotiations across difference (2–3).

Everyday encounters with difference in public space are often mediated by modernist regimes of planning and design. According to Sandercock (2003: 8) if we are ever to realise the ideal of a truly democratic *cosmopolis*, embodied in an inclusive multicultural city, a combined effort is needed involving not just planners and politicians, but local residents, social movements and a commitment to transformative planning practice with a focus on the project of intercultural co-existence. For her, such a project is not just about ‘mobilising resources and power, but also about organising hope, negotiating fears, [and] mediating collective memories of identity and belonging’ (8).

*Everyday racism* is a concept of importance to the field. It is similarly influenced by a phenomenological approach with an emphasis on understanding the intersections between macro-discourses and
structures and everyday practices. The concept has been developed most fully by Essed (1991, 2002) who describes it as an experience that is both direct and vicarious (2002: 208). Everyday racism, she argues, is not about extreme incidents but about mundane practices (204) by nature so embedded in routine and everyday practice that it is experienced as amorphic and difficult to explicitly identify. It involves cumulative practices, often covert and hard to pinpoint (204), but is felt and experienced persistently (208). As a result these micro-injustices become normal, fused into familiar practices (204). In the Australian context Noble has done interesting work in this area; in his article ‘The Discomfort of Strangers’ which explores experiences and impacts of racism towards Lebanese youth as manifested in practices of ‘everyday incivility’ and its effect on their sense of ontological security (Noble 2005). In the UK, Herbert et al. (2008) have explored the everyday forms of racism experienced by Ghanaians in London, particularly in the workplace, and, interestingly, their diverse responses to these experiences. They argue that these coping strategies are a relatively unexplored dimension of discrimination.

Although the majority of the reference literature for the everyday multiculturalism perspective is drawn from disciplines such as sociology, human geography and cultural studies, there are insights to be drawn from social psychology on the domain of face-to-face cross-cultural contact, popularly known as ‘contact theory’. Allport (1954: 287) highlighted four conditions that were important to more positive inter-group relations: equal status between groups; common goals; inter-group cooperation and support or sanction of the authorities, law or custom. Contrary to contact theory, an alternative view, known as ‘conflict theory’, suggests that inter-group contact can produce conflict rather than a reduction in prejudice and a more positive regard for out-groups (Hewstone and Greenland 2000: 136–7). The way in which groups may have incompatible goals and be competing for scarce resources also undermines contact theory and favours conflict theory (Hewstone and Greenland 2000: 137). Nevertheless, the conflict model of inter-group relations has not served to undermine the contact model. It challenges many of its assumptions by raising different conditions and processes that shape inter-group relations. One key insight was that prejudice tends to make those who hold such views avoid inter-group contact and that a reduction in prejudice may in fact not be a result of contact but may be a factor in determining whether there is any contact in the first place (Pettigrew 1998: 69). Another issue relates to whether or not the effects of contact can be generalised beyond any specific situation in which it is observed and how this might happen (Pettigrew 1998: 70). In light of such issues, Pettigrew points towards four processes that cut across the conditions in Allport’s thesis and may better serve to explain and understand how positive inter-group relations may emerge (Pettigrew 1998: 70–3): learning about out-groups that corrects negative views; positively reinforced behaviour modification that leads to attitude changes; generating affective ties, such as friendship; and in-group reappraisal of their existing norms and customs to be more inclusive of out-group worldviews.

However, a purely social-psychological view brackets out important mediating factors such as material and food cultures, the senses and habits. Wise (2009) points out that the ‘encultured’ senses, habitus and bodily hexis contribute in important ways to people’s orientation and/or disorientation (Rodaway 1994) in diverse urban spaces, and that these frame the appreciation of the qualities of such environments (Urry 2000: 79) and the cultural others in them. In her article ‘Sensuous Multiculturalism’, she explores the embodied and sensuous experience of White Anglo-Celtic senior citizens of the changes brought to their suburb by recent Chinese migration to the area and the accompanying shift in the local shopping landscape. She found that more attention needs to be paid to the ways in which long-time residents of areas transformed by immigration need to in fact re-habituate their bodies as they relate both to new urban spaces, and to newcomers culturally different from themselves. She argues that the senses and embodied habitus are deeply intertwined with memories re-experienced in the present in a situation of rapid urban change, and that this complex juxtaposition of bodies past and present influences the emotions elderly residents associate with their neighbourhood and, in this case, their Chinese neighbours.

Highmore (2008) has a slightly different take on white interactions with ‘exotic’ food cultures. Highmore suggests that ‘taste and smell play an inexorable role in everyday forms of racism...’ but ‘they are also central components for convivial cosmopolitan intercultural inter-ethnic exchange’ (2008: 395–6). Arguing for the importance of exploring intercultural sensual life, he tells the story of an aggressively masculine white working-class man eating in a South Asian restaurant in London’s Brick Lane. Highmore argues that the chilli in this man’s curry has agentic qualities which mediates his engagement with his racial Other, in this case the South Asian restaurateur. The chilli becomes an agent through which this man performs his masculinity. The relationship this produces with his Asian counterpart however, is highly ambivalent; the chilli becomes an ironic marker of white working-class masculinity, but...
It is the chilli with whom he does battle and which mediates his relation to the South Asian restaurateur.

As the existing literature suggests, the study of intercultural encounters and social relations is a potentially rich area of scholarship, both conceptually and empirically. It is in this intellectual spirit that we present this collection on the topic of everyday multiculturalism to further the study of how diversity is inhabited in urban spaces around the world.

**Sites of encounter: a thematic overview of the book**

This volume brings together chapters focused on the study of living with cultural difference and diversity in everyday life, representing a range of disciplinary perspectives and geographical locations. For the sake of coherence, we have organised them thematically. The chapters by Wise, Noble and Semi et al. explore everyday interactions in the local *neighbourhood*. Wise employs the concept of ‘quotidian transversality’ in her chapter to signal the everyday intercultural modes and spaces which facilitate sociality across difference in a super-diverse suburban zone. These include forms of quotidian gift exchange and reciprocity, kinship, ways of talking such as gossip networks, actor networks, place orientation and ‘crossing spaces’. Drawing on her fieldwork in the Sydney suburb of Ashfield and in Griffith, a regional Australian town, Wise introduces personalities akin to Werbner’s working-class cosmopolitans who are engaged in facilitating intercultural exchanges. She calls these personalities ‘transversal enablers’ and they produce intersectional gossips, knowledge and inter-ethnic information networks through their neighbourhood interactions across cultural difference. She found that these transversal enablers establish and smooth neighbourly encounters across difference. At the same time, Wise cautions that the cross-cultural engagement and welcome facilitated by transversal enablers are not void of power relations and may produce discomfort and tensions due to their sometimes overzealous efforts to bridge cultural divides.

Noble’s chapter situates the discussion within the context of the ‘crisis of multiculturalism’ in Australia, both as policy and scholarship. He argues for the importance of rescuing everyday cosmopolitanism – which he sees as an open-ness to cultural diversity, a practical relation to the plurality of cultures, and a willingness and tendency to engage with others. This ‘people-mixing’ helps produce an evolving cultural diversity in which people manage the competing demands of cultural identity and social co-existence at home, work and in leisure spaces.

Akin to Wise’s quotidian transversality, Noble suggests that everyday cosmopolitanism is characterised by a labour of community which involves personalities who facilitate cross-cultural interactions and, as he puts it, simply get things done across cultural difference. Unlike Werbner’s working-class cosmopolitans, the characters Noble describes are not particularly cross-culturally competent and aware in the way we typically imagine the cosmopolitan. Instead, they display a more practical orientation towards ‘getting along’ that has little to do with cultural difference at all.

Semi et al.’s chapter in this volume stresses the importance of conceptualising everyday multiculturalism both as a category of analysis and as practice. For them everyday multiculturalism in practice refers to the daily, mundane, (apparently) unproblematic relations in local contexts requiring a constant ability to recognise and use differences, to construct and deconstruct boundaries, and to sustain and resist common representations of otherness. As a category of analysis it represents a specific sociological point of view oriented to detecting how difference is constructed and contested, who uses it, in what situations, to mark what kind of distinctions, for what goals, and with what results. Based on ethnographic studies of Muslim associations and ethnic neighbourhhoods in Italy, their study highlights how immigrants use their cultural and religious difference in a strategic way to ‘offer an image of themselves and to forge relations they view as suitable and satisfactory according to the occasion, resources available and their own specific objectives’.

The second thematic strain in this volume is around food and cross-cultural interactions. Kopitiams (meaning coffee-shop in the Chinese dialect Hokkien) are found throughout Malaysia and are popular among Chinese, Indian and Malays as ‘everyday’ places to eat, catch up with friends and drink tea. According to Khoo, the kopitiam is often revered in the popular imagination and represented in the media as a cosmopolitan trans-ethnic space. Indeed, the kopitiam was a popular meeting place from the time of independence where inter-ethnic solidarities were forged and an ethnically inclusive nationalist moment was created. However, Khoo points out that in recent years, due to growing racialisation and Islamisation in Malaysia – which has rigidly divided Malaysians into Muslim and non-Muslims – the kopitiam as a cosmopolitan space that fostered inter-racial exchange has dissipated. It nonetheless remains a symbol of everyday conviviality in multicultural Malaysia.

Duruz’s take on food and diversity is concerned with how ethnicity delineates and divides everyday spaces and how meanings of ethnicity...
and nation permeate everyday food cultures. Based on fieldwork in Sydney and London, her chapter examines the culinary biographies of two white women living in London and Sydney close to shopping streets known for their diversity of their ‘ethnic’ communities. She found unexpected engagements with ‘Asia’ and ‘Europe’ and ‘cosmopolitan identity’ which contributed to a more complex and ambivalent sense of belonging than her subjects first supposed when reflecting on their more obvious identities as ‘mainstream’ white British and Australian women.

Many mundane encounters with cultural difference occur in multicultural shopping precincts. Two chapters in this collection address this theme. Watson’s contribution explores two London street markets in terms of the complexities of the intercultural encounters that occur in them. Comparing the different politics and patterns of the two markets prompts her to argue against constructing an overarching narrative of everyday multicultural encounter in favour of a localised approach which takes into account the context-specific textures of each space. She points out that in some localities traders and shoppers have accommodated the sociocultural shifts with minimal hostility and even enthusiasm and in others nostalgia for an imagined homogenous community of white working-class life has mobilised considerable hostility between the long-established working-class communities and more recent arrivals to the market. She shows how national and even international events and the wider socioeconomic climate have micro-effects on how race relations play out in local places.

Radice’s chapter, meanwhile, deals with the experiences of everyday multiculturalism in multiethnic neighbourhood shopping streets in Montréal, Canada. Given Quebec’s historical struggle for sovereignty, the French-speaking province has produced lively debates around ethno-cultural diversity. Radice explores how diverse everyday users of local shopping streets engage with cultural difference in terms of consumption and interactions with culturally different others. She deploys a number of different theories of cosmopolitanism to explore how they might play out and apply to a real-life local context. Like Watson, she finds that ‘cosmopolitanism’ actually plays out quite differently in different urban settings.

Leisure and sport activities offer possibilities for involuntary cross-cultural contact and frequently involve situations requiring the negotiation of difference, very often of the most embodied kind. Sherman’s chapter is based on ethnographic fieldwork in a Brooklyn bodybuilding gymnasium located in a culturally diverse working-class New York neighbourhood. Taking a thoroughly embodied perspective, she begins her analysis by examining how members of the gym respond to cultural difference and this, she argues, oscillates between highly stereotypical and at other times fluid notions of identity. While she questions whether the common purpose of visiting the gym for ‘building muscle’ (as in many other sporting activities with a mutual goal) negates the politics and hierarchies of race and ethnicity, she does suggest that this common purpose offers moments of solidarity around the sport itself. She argues that racial and ethnic differences mark and reconcile other relationships of power.

Goodall et al.’s chapter has a slightly different take on the leisure theme. They explore fishing cultures among diverse migrant groups in multicultural Sydney. Based upon interviews with the diverse people who live near and use the Georges River, they explore how cultural differences are observed, embraced, inter-fused, sometimes clash, and are often peacefully negotiated among those who fish there. They show how everyday locality is performatively produced through embodied fishing practices through a three-part typology of fishing: fishing out of place (new fishing practices of migrants); fishing as a claim (performative deployments of embodied knowledge); and fishing to produce locality (where fishing can be seen as a future-oriented place-making activity). They conclude that fishing opens up a way to observe contestation over space, place and nation and also represents an embodied use of space which not only allows but is often deliberately mobilised to achieve new relationships with place and people.

Everyday solidarities and politics are the subject of Hudson et al.’s and Collins’s papers. Hudson et al. present findings from their study of intra- and inter-ethnic relations among diverse residents in the neighbourhood of Moss Side in Manchester, UK. They consider the activities and social spaces that facilitate social connections as well as the barriers to social interaction. In so doing the chapter draws out the extent to which, and the reasons why, intra- and inter-ethnic social interactions matter to people. It also considers the role of creative grassroots projects in fostering positive interactions and connections, recognising how they are shaped by gender, age and class as well as migration history, ethnicity and religion. They argue that, despite government calls to end residential segregation in the name of enhancing community cohesion, spatial proximity does not necessarily result in social interactions across cultural difference.

Similar themes are considered by Collins in his chapter, using the example of a group of Asian international students who formed a volunteer ‘clean-up brigade’ to pick up rubbish in the centre of Auckland,
New Zealand. The group was an attempt to engage with the public in Auckland and to overcome racial stereotypes about 'Asian students'. Collins suggests that there is real value in drawing attention to the smaller examples of everyday multiculturalism in contemporary cities. The volunteer team functioned to bridge the gap between Asian students and mainly white New Zealanders by creating a situation where everyday inter-ethnic encounters with members of the public, both positive and negative, could occur. The activity also established a network of friendships that are now maintained transnationally between the different localities where these individuals now reside.

While many of the chapters in this collection reveal surprisingly positive encounters of the everyday kind, it remains a fact that everyday racism and inter-ethnic tensions still exist. This time, focusing on how economic relations mediate race relations, Han uses the case of Korean-owned businesses in Los Angeles and their relationships with Latino workers. He argues that the split labour market – where Korean workers are favoured over Latinos for higher-status positions – plays a significant part in shaping the nature of ethnic conflict between Koreans and Latinos in the neighbourhood more generally. The final chapter in this volume, by Velayutham, is a case-study based on the immigrant city-state of Singapore. The main racial groups in Singapore are accorded official status and are guaranteed equality under Singapore's policy of multi-racialism. Singapore considers itself to be a racially tolerant and harmonious country and indeed the four official groups – Chinese, Malays, Indians and Others – have co-existed peacefully since its independence in 1965. However, as Velayutham argues, everyday social tensions and discomforts arising from living with cultural difference are rarely officially acknowledged. Indeed, the term racism is entirely absent from official discourse and public debate in Singapore. Drawing on Essed’s groundbreaking work (1991), he explores some of the everyday forms of racism that Indians experience in Singapore so as to document and bring to light such cases which are rarely publicly acknowledged.

Conclusions

The literature outlined above and the chapters in this book represent just some of the domains in which the study of everyday life can cast new light upon how we live with difference in our diverse urban spaces. While some chapters highlight actually existing spaces and practices of productive intercultural exchange, others signal the importance of understanding how discomforts and tensions arise. Above all, we hope this collection of work exploring what we have termed ‘everyday multiculturalism’ reveals complexities and ambiguities hitherto unrecognised in the dominant paradigm of scholarship on multiculturalism. Focusing on the micro-politics of everyday life casts light upon the gaps of policy, upon how the theoretical ideal of multicultural citizenship plays out in situated contexts, and upon the mundane ways in which cultural difference is understood, constructed, experienced and enacted. It shows how national and international structures, discourses and politics filter down to the local, how they impact upon and are negotiated by everyday diverse actors in their relationship to one another, and reveals how cosmopolitanism is not the sole preserve of an educated elite. We hope that the chapters in the book break new ground and encourage others’ interest in this new field of research.

Note

1. Thanks to Bernard Leckning for his assistance with this section on contact theory.

References