This essay examines the ways in which geography, as a discipline, has been influenced by feminist scholarship in the field. It explains that early feminist critiques of the discipline examined the extent to which geography had overwhelmingly dealt with the lives of men and the ways in which its theories, methods, and content reflected men's experiences. Geographers are paying increasing attention to the ways in which gender interacts with other social categories, such as race, ethnicity, class, nationality, immigrant status, and life course stage, to understand the complexities of relationships between women and men and among women. Feminist geography is pluralistic in its theoretical and methodological stances. A great deal of research has been done using in-depth interview strategies. (Contains 17 references.) (MDM)
Discipline Analysis

Janice Monk
University of Arizona
Women in the Curriculum

GEOGRAPHY

Discipline Analysis

Janice Monk
University of Arizona

National Center for Curriculum Transformation
Resources on Women
1997
Since the 1970s feminist and multicultural scholarship has been challenging the traditional content, organization, methodologies, and epistemologies of the academic disciplines. By now this scholarship is formidable in both quantity and quality and in its engagement of complex issues. The National Center for Curriculum Transformation Resources on Women is therefore publishing a series of essays that provide brief, succinct overviews of the new scholarship. Outstanding scholars in the disciplines generously agreed to write the essays, which are intended to help faculty who want to revise courses in light of the new information and perspectives. Each essay is accompanied by a bibliography that includes references for further reading, resources for the classroom, and electronic resources.

Elaine Hedges
Series Editor
Since it emerged in the mid-1970s, geographic research on gender has become international in scope. It has created a substantial body of knowledge about many aspects of women’s lives and revealed the importance of gendered ideologies in shaping the nature of space and place. In the process, gender studies have played an important part in heightening awareness that geographic knowledge reflects the cultural and political contexts in which it is created. In Europe, North America, and Australasia, for example, the considerable growth in the participation of women in paid employment since the 1960s has directed a great deal of the research towards the implications of urban spatial organization for the daily lives of women faced with combining work outside the home with major responsibilities for household maintenance and child care. Research in African and South Asian settings, by contrast, has emphasized rural contexts and development issues.

Studies on women and gender within geography have been more extensive in some sub-fields of the discipline than others. Within the broad area of human geography, they initially focused on social and economic geography, and more recently have turned to cultural geography as well. Some work has been done in political geography, but relatively little in historical geography. One important aspect of the research has been its recognition that some of the traditional boundaries between the subfields are artificial, or at least not helpful in understanding issues of gen-
der, where the social, economic, and political arenas of life are seen to be interconnected. Some sub-fields of the discipline have been virtually neglected, however. Only a handful of scholars have taken up issues of gender in relation to the booming technical sub-fields of cartography and geographic information systems; even fewer have paid attention to physical geography, and then mainly to look at the representation of women as geographers in this branch of the discipline. Regardless of sub-field, most of the work on gender has been conducted by women who have also documented aspects of their own marginality in the profession. Rarely are women in positions of power, and they are likely to be differently distributed across institutions and specialties than men.

In this short overview of gender studies in geography, I will first discuss the critiques which feminist geographers have made of their discipline’s failure to attend to women’s lives, then go on to look at some of the main currents within gender studies, discussing the concepts used, the content incorporated, and the methodological discussions that have emerged.

**Feminist Critiques of Geography**

Early work provided important critiques of the extent to which geography had overwhelmingly dealt with the lives of men and the ways in which its theories, methods, and content reflected men’s experiences, impoverishing the discipline and failing to contribute towards the resolution of women’s serious social, economic, and political inequality in either developed or “third world” countries. Research on migration, for example, had generally presented men as decision makers, and women (if mentioned) as passive followers, despite an absence of studies con-
firming how household decisions were made and the presence of data that showed women predominating in a variety of migration streams. Urban travel models had focused on the journey to work (implicitly of men in full-time jobs), overlooking the more complex patterns of women combining travel for employment (which might be part-time) with journeys related to meeting household needs. Economic geographers emphasized research on heavy manufacturing industries and commercial agriculture rather than on female-employing industries, service employment, or agriculture for household consumption.

Feminist critics also identified methodological problems in geographic research. Commonly used secondary sources such as censuses and indicators were seen to mask women’s unpaid reproductive work, and field research practices, such as conventionally interviewing the (male) “head” as representative of the household were recognized as inadequate. Sexist biases were identified in teaching materials as well as in research, revealing gaps in content and problems with language usage (for example, not only underrepresenting women but minimizing their agency). The question of the “masculinity” of much geographic writing remains an issue for critique.

Conceptual Frameworks and Their Application

Concepts developed in interdisciplinary feminist scholarship have been integral in geographic work. Central has been the recognition that gender is a cultural and historical construct and that what societies see as appropriate activities for women and men differ from place to place. Numerous studies explore the ways in which ideologies
about gender are implicit in the geographies of daily life (for example, in interpreting the widely reported shorter journeys of women than men from home to employment in Western cities in terms of women’s roles as mothers). They show how thinking about gender roles and gender relations has affected the evolution of spatial structures (for example, the historical development of suburbia as a space for women’s domestic life); they explore how failures and problems of economic development policies and programs can be linked to planners’ erroneous assumptions that farming is a male activity and that women are inconsequential globally in agricultural production.

Increasingly, geographers are paying attention to ways in which gender interacts with other social categories such as race/ethnicity, class, nationality, immigrant status, and life course stage to understand the complexities of relationships between women and men and among women. In these studies, questions are asked about the roles of space and place in the reproduction of gender, ethnicity, class and so on, and conversely, how gender interacts with class, ethnicity, etc. in reproducing spaces and places. The extensive research project by Hanson and Pratt in Worcester, Massachusetts provides many telling examples, as they look at differences among neighborhoods in work, family, and community relationships. They reveal how employers’ labor recruitment strategies create distinctive gender and ethnic combinations in specific workplaces and show how people’s use of family and neighborhood networks shapes their knowledge about employment prospects, in each case contributing to the persistence of occupational segregation on gender and ethnic bases. They report daily space-time strategies for combining home and work which vary by class and neighborhood, describing, for example, how working class couples often mesh shift work so that one parent is at home to care for children.
whereas in middle class neighborhoods part-time work by mothers is presented as normative.9

A complementary study in England by Gregson and Lowe highlights how British cultural ideologies (which influence policies with respect to service provision and worker training) come together with gender, class and life-course patterns to give rise to a situation in which young upper-middle class professionals hire women of particular age and class backgrounds to provide services within the home (young lower-middle class women as nannies and older working class women as house cleaners).10 Such research not only shows how space, place and gender come together but also acknowledges the importance of recognizing that productive and reproductive work are interdependent. It challenges the traditional distinctions within the discipline of treating economic and social geography as separate domains.

Like feminist scholars in other disciplines who have found the analytical distinctions between public and private spheres of life both useful and problematic, geographers have explored the expression of these concepts in space. They have opened hitherto ignored private spaces to geographic scrutiny. Early articles suggested that geographers should examine private spaces (domestic interiors) as women’s spaces (in contrast to traditional landscape studies which had focused on the outdoors).11 As feminist geography developed, the distinction between “public” and “private” (like the distinctions between social and economic, or between production and reproduction) was seen to be blurred, and the interdependence of the two was recognized. Examples from the political and environmental realms illustrate this point. Studies of recent political struggles in Latin America show male state aggressors invading private spaces to abduct state “enemies,” while
Discipline Analysis

women have drawn on gender ideologies that support their private roles as mothers to enter public spaces to protest state violence. Similarly, Mayer argues that the Israeli occupation's invasion of the private spaces of Palestinian homes had the effect of heightening Palestinian women's commitment to nationalism and increased their public political participation.

Geographers working on the theme of human relationships with the natural environment have also found that the idea of connections between the public and private provides a useful conceptual framework. Concerns for private matters—the health of their families, the supply of fuel, the quality of water available to the household and community—have prompted women to enter the public sphere to protest against deteriorating and toxic environments and to initiate such activities as forestry programs that involve planting indigenous species that have multiple uses rather than supporting investment in fast-growing exotic species for export markets. An important question in this research is the extent to which gender shapes environmental values. Here geographers are critical of that segment of interdisciplinary feminist literature which positions women as essentially closer to nature than men; instead, they seek to identify how gender intersects with cultural heritages, ecological location, educational levels and positioning within economic and political structures.

Theoretical and Methodological Orientations

Feminist geography has been, and continues to be, pluralistic in its theoretical and methodological stances. In the early years, empirical (largely positivist) research

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played an important role in establishing that women’s experiences of space and place differed from men’s. These approaches continue to be important, especially in applied studies of development issues in Asia and Africa that document women’s work and relationships to natural resources. Early theorizing (especially in Britain) favored socialist feminist approaches that located women’s oppression within capitalism and patriarchy. More recently, post-modernist and post-structuralist thinking has assumed an important position within feminist geography. Questions of the connections between space, place, and the construction of gendered identities are of increasing interest, as are issues regarding representation, both symbolically and in the material landscape.¹⁶

Feminist research in geography has found utility in a number of classical geographic methodological ideas, but it has also questioned traditional methodologies. Recognition of the utility of scale as an important approach to framing research has persisted, and feminist geographers have employed various spatial scales in their work, highlighting patterns that may be overlooked by scholars in other disciplines which are less sensitive to the implications of scale as they pose questions and seek answers. Work has been conducted on local, regional, national, and international/global scales, illustrating the utility of each. For example, a forthcoming volume on women’s work and daily lives in the European Union, in which scale serves as an organizing principle, uses multinational and national scales to highlight the gendered ideologies of state policies, then introduces urban and neighborhood scales to focus on personal and familial values.¹⁷ McDowell and Massey’s classic study of the gendering of work in Britain presents a regional scale argument.¹⁸ Hanson’s and Pratt’s in-depth research on the significance of space in understanding occupational segregation is an intra-urban scale study and
makes a convincing case for the importance of attending to the local. Many of the case studies on gender and rural development (for example, those reported in Momsen and Kinnaird) involve detailed household and community level analysis. Collectively, the research not only illustrates the value of considering various scales in understanding gender issues, but also demonstrates that geographers working at different scales can engage with gender studies.

Methodologically, a great deal of feminist geography has used in-depth interview strategies. To some extent, such work developed because of the paucity of secondary data on women’s lives. But it also stemmed from perspectives that valued letting women “speak for themselves” and aimed to reduce the distance between researcher and “subject.” These goals present dilemmas for interviewers and writers struggling to represent people who are different from themselves. What are the dynamics of men interviewing women or vice versa, for example? How does one deal with relationships in research across racial, ethnic, religious, or national categories? Recently, the question of appropriate uses of quantification in feminist research has resurfaced, together with discussion of combining methodological strategies.

Gender studies are now clearly on the geographical map, but the atlas still has many incomplete and blank pages. Research and teaching by local geographers has barely begun in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and East Asia. Very little progress has been made in incorporating gender perspectives into introductory texts in other than a superficial manner, or into the burgeoning area of pre-collegiate geography in the United States. A modest project to create modules for insertion into undergraduate courses was carried out under a Women’s Educational Equity Act grant to the Association of American Geographers in 1978-80. Beginning in 1995, “Finding A Way” was funded by the

National Center for Curriculum Transformation Resources on Women
National Science Foundation to support efforts by the National Council for Geographic Education to provide in-service education for K-12 teachers that would increase the interest and achievement of girls of diverse ethnic backgrounds in geography. Topically, only recently have geographers begun to examine issues about sexuality, the body, health, and women's safety. Relatively little work has been done on girls and young women or on older women. Nevertheless, in two decades the field has gone from miniscule beginnings to become a flourishing area of research, especially by younger scholars, supporting its own international journal, *Gender, Place and Culture*, study groups within the geographic societies of a number of countries, and a Commission on Gender within the International Geographical Union.

**Notes**


8. For example, some employers recruit Latinos from particular neighborhoods; another seeks Polish immigrant men from one parish. Hanson and Pratt found employers and employees able to describe quite specific social geographies within firms. See Susan Hanson and Geraldine Pratt, *Gender, Work and Space*, London: Routledge, 1994.

9. Hanson and Pratt, *op. cit.*


19. Hanson and Pratt, *op. cit.*


Suggested Readings


**Additional Resources**

A feminist geography listserv is operated from the University of Kentucky. Periodically it includes bibliographic compilations. To subscribe to the list: <listserv@lsv.uky.edu> with the message <subscribe geogfem (your name)>.

The Geographic Perspectives on Women Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers orga-
Discipline Analysis

recognizes numerous sessions at the annual meetings of the Association, publishes a newsletter, and awards annual prizes for student papers and dissertation proposals. Information about the Specialty Group and the address of the chair may be obtained from the Association of American Geographers, 1710 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009-3198.

The Commission on Gender and Geography of the International Geographical Union organizes sessions at International Geographical Congresses and periodic symposia around the world. Its bi-annual newsletter, which includes a bibliographic section, is posted on the feminist geography listserv noted above.

*Gender, Place and Culture* is an international journal devoted primarily to feminist geography; regular reviews of research in feminist geography are published in *Progress in Human Geography*; the book series, *International Studies of Women and Place*, published by Routledge, issues several titles annually, aimed at advanced undergraduate and graduate students.
About the Author

Janice Jones Monk is Executive Director of the Southwest Institute for Research on Women and Adjunct Professor of Geography at the University of Arizona. She earned her BA at the University of Sydney, Australia, and her MA and Ph.D. at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Dr. Monk has co-authored or co-edited seven books and published many articles and book chapters in women's studies, geography, and higher education. These include *Full Circles: Geographies of Women over the Life Course*, *Women of the European Union: The Politics of Work and Daily Life*, and *The Desert is No Lady: Southwestern Landscapes in Women's Writing and Art*. She is also Executive Producer of the film *The Desert is No Lady*. She has directed and consulted for curriculum transformation projects since 1978 and co-edited a special issue of *Women's Studies International Form* (14/4, 1991) on internationalizing the women's studies curriculum.
**Reader Comment**

**Discipline Analysis Essay: Geography**

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Publications of the National Center for Curriculum Transformation Resources on Women

WOMEN IN THE CURRICULUM

The following publications consist of directories, manuals, and essays covering the primary information needed by educators to transform the curriculum to incorporate the scholarship on women. The publications have been designed to be brief, user friendly, and cross referenced to each other. They can be purchased as a set or as individual titles. Tables of contents and sample passages are available on the National Center Web page: http://www.towson.edu/ncctrw/.

Directory of Curriculum Transformation Projects and Activities in the U.S.
The Directory provides brief descriptions of 237 curriculum transformation projects or activities from 1973 to the present. It is intended to help educators review the amount and kinds of work that have been occurring in curriculum transformation on women and encourage them to consult project publications (see also Catalog of Resources) and to contact project directors for more information about projects of particular interest and relevance to their needs.
386 pages, 8½ x 11 hardcover, $30 individuals, $45 institutions, ISBN 1-885303-07-6

Catalog of Curriculum Transformation Resources
The Catalog lists materials developed by curriculum transformation projects and national organizations that are available either free or for sale. These include proposals, reports, bibliographies, workshop descriptions, reading lists, revised syllabi, classroom materials, participant essays, newsletters, and other products of curriculum transformation activities, especially from those projects listed in the Directory. These resources provide valuable information, models, and examples for educators leading and participating in curriculum transformation activities.
(Available fall 1997)

Introductory Bibliography for Curriculum Transformation
The Introductory Bibliography provides a list of references for beginning curriculum transformation on women, especially for those organizing projects and activities for faculty and teachers. It does not attempt to be comprehensive but rather to simplify the process of selection by offering an “introduction” that will lead you to other sources.
15 pages, 6 x 9 paper, $7, ISBN 1-885303-32-7

Getting Started: Planning Curriculum Transformation
Planning Curriculum Transformation describes the major stages and components of curriculum transformation projects as they have developed since about 1980. Written by Elaine Hedges, whose long experience in women’s studies and curriculum transformation projects informs this synthesis, Getting Started is designed to help faculty and administrators initiate, plan, and conduct faculty development and curriculum projects whose purpose is to incorporate the content and perspectives of women’s studies and race/ethnic studies scholarship into their courses.
124 pages, 6 x 9 hardcover, $20 individuals, $30 institutions, ISBN 1-885303-06-8
Internet Resources on Women: Using Electronic Media in Curriculum Transformation

This manual gives clear, step-by-step instructions on how to use e-mail, find e-mail addresses, and access e-mail discussion lists relevant to curriculum transformation. It explains Telnet, FTP, Gopher, and the World Wide Web, and how to access and use them. It discusses online information about women on e-mail lists and World Wide Web sites. Written by Joan Korenman, who has accumulated much experience through running the Women's Studies e-mail list, this manual is a unique resource for identifying information for curriculum transformation on the Internet. Updates to this manual will be available on the World Wide Web at http://www.umbc.edu/wmst/updates.html.

130 pages, 6 x 9 hardcover, $20 individuals, $30 institutions, ISBN 1-885303-08-4

Funding: Obtaining Money for Curriculum Transformation Projects and Activities

This manual is intended to assist educators who lack experience in applying for grants but are frequently expected to secure their own funding for projects. The manual provides an overview of the process, basic information and models, and advice from others experienced in fund raising.

150 pages, 6 x 9 hardcover, $20 individuals, $30 institutions, ISBN 1-885303-05-x

Evaluation: Measuring the Success of Curriculum Transformation

This manual outlines several designs which could be used when assessing the success of a project. Evaluation: Measuring the Success of Curriculum Transformation is written by Beth Vanfossen, whose background in the teaching of research methods as well as practical experience in conducting evaluation research informs the manual's advice. Evaluation is an increasingly important component of curriculum transformation work on which project directors and others often need assistance.

(Available fall 1997)

Discipline Analysis Essays

Under the general editorship of Elaine Hedges, the National Center has requested scholars in selected academic disciplines to write brief essays summarizing the impact of the new scholarship on women in their discipline. These essays identify and explain the issues to be confronted as faculty in these disciplines revise their courses to include the information and perspectives provided by this scholarship. The series is under continuous development, and titles will be added as they become available. See order form for essays currently available.

27 - 60 pages, 6 x 9 paper, $7 each

CUNY Panels: Rethinking the Disciplines

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