

*For the feminist geographers – students,
colleagues, and friends – whom I've worked
with and learned from over the years.*

Feminist Geography in Practice: Research and Methods

Edited by Pamela Moss

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Defining Feminism?

Feminist Pedagogy Working Group

Once "defined," feminism immediately becomes like an "it," a "thing," something graspable, something tangible. Not a process, a manner of asking questions, a way of looking at the world. Defining feminism is difficult because it's not something I have to articulate day to day. Of course, the question "*How do you define feminism?*" has different meanings for different women, different people. (A member of the Feminist Pedagogy Working Group)

Historically, both practically and academically, feminism has been part of a politics *for* women. Whether it be about control over reproductive rights, the construction of knowledge, or the concrete manifestations of patriarchal social relations, gender, defined as the social differences between males and females, was the central construct around which feminists developed theory and acted politically. During the last two decades of the twentieth century, feminism underwent two dramatic shifts. First, feminist critiques by women marginalized by feminist theory and within the women's movement shattered the category "woman," revealing it to be monolithic, one that was built on white, middle-class, Western women. Black women, lesbian women, disabled women, women from the South, and working-class women in their writings and in their actions showed that feminism was not for *all* women, a premise upon which second wave feminism was based; that type of feminism was only for an elite woman. Second, at the same time, this emphasis on difference among women coincided with the increased popularity of engaging with poststructural thought among feminist academics. An appealing aspect of poststructural thinking for feminists was the combination of destabilizing notions in the realms of knowledge

and truth claims: rather than being singular, fixed, exhaustible, and universal, knowledge and truth claims were conceptualized as being multiple, fluid, incomplete, and contingent.

The resistance of many feminists to the "singular" – of woman, of politics, of gender – is what has attracted me to feminism and feminist writings. I understand feminism in its broadest sense as *praxis*, a form of political engagement aiming to analyse and to change inequitable and unjust social relations. It also is about exploring how to integrate personal feminisms in wider contexts, so that feminism's questions and goals do not just reflect the dominant interests of one 'kind' of woman. (A second member of the Feminist Pedagogy Working Group)

The *willingness* of feminisms to respond to critique and for feminists themselves to be self-critical means that feminism, or more accurately *feminisms*, has the potential to be an open and dynamic knowledge community. Yet there still exists a tension between feminists claiming a particular epistemological standpoint and claiming a legitimacy for multiple truth claims. While both positions advocate continual struggle against the elision and erasure of differences among women, among people, each does so in diverse ways.

To me, feminism means accepting the notion that feminism may mean different things in different contexts. With my union, I'm always pointing out that there are issues that need to be addressed *for* women, *by* women. I'm the only one that knows anything about feminism! But when I'm with some of my feminist co-activists, I'm able to say something about marginalized groups within the city without having to be defensive or explain what I mean. And just because I say something about women in the street community, there is not the assumption that I think that they're the only marginalized group. Feminism plays out differently in each place, and I'm the one trying to figure out what feminism means and then trying to act on what I think is the best course of action. Still, feminism to me is about women somehow, while at the same time being about dismantling the injustices that systemic and personal abuse of power creates. (A third member of the Feminist Pedagogy Working Group)

This tension between a feminism that has as its primary starting point being a woman and one that relies on the destabilization of the category "woman" has been a catalyst for thinking through feminist research. Experiential knowledge is a cornerstone for second wave feminists, especially in a collective voice, just as understanding self, identity, and subjectivity is a cornerstone for third wave feminism. Drawing on women's experiences as a particular standpoint is a powerful way to demonstrate

what it is about being a woman that is different than being a man: in childbirth, childrearing, and reproductive capacity, labor in the workplace and the home, and being in public and private spaces. Experience can also provide insight into new spaces, through which other truth claims can be made.

Much of my motivation for going back to grad school was to figure out where I stood as a feminist. I had first come to feminism when, in my teens, it had helped me name and think through some of my own personal experiences. I figured, as many others did, that feminism was based on the premise that *all* women are linked through a common experience of oppression. By the time I was in my early twenties, my interest in feminism had waned, because as much as I could recognise societal inequalities I didn't really experience oppression in my day to day life. I had no conceptual tools to understand my privilege. Clearly, if I wanted to keep feminism in my life, I needed a more complex model and one that wasn't premised on *me*, or my "I", as a centre. (A fourth member of the Feminist Pedagogy Working Group)

Just as feminist critiques from the margins and poststructural thought has shown, women's experience, just like any other experience, is not universal. In order to understand experience, feminists were indeed going to have to look beyond oppressions based on dichotomous notions of gender (feminine/masculine) toward a complexity that values difference and diversity. Feminists have not given up the category of experience, but they have turned toward trying to grasp how concepts related to experience matter in doing feminist research. Thinking about research involves figuring out ways the self can be known, how subjectivities emerge, and how identities form. From these types of understandings, feminists have moved toward identifying, and then learning from, specific subject positionings.

As the writers in this section tell us, taking on feminist research is fraught with irreconcilable dilemmas, unanswered questions, and contradictory practices. Because there is no "one" way or "right" way to think or distinct path to take, a prescription for "good" feminist research does not exist. But at the same time, there are issues that can be addressed that assist in thinking through what it means to take up feminism in research in geography. Drawing on their own experiences in undertaking feminist research projects the authors in this section disclose their feminist research paths, full of decisions they made over the course of their engagements with feminism. Mary Gilmartin tries to make sense of her journey through literature and geography as a way to go beyond the limits of knowledge set for her by geography's colonial past. Meghan Cope details a set of implications arising out of research based on any one of several feminist epistemologies. Louise Johnson, in her work with unemployed women,

shows how feminism did make a difference at various points throughout her research project. Together the material in these chapters provides a richly textured blend of a multiplicity of ways to take on feminism in feminist geographic research.

Short 1 Being Feminist in Geography

Feminist Geography in the German-Speaking Academy: History of a Movement

Elisabeth Bäschlin

Scene 1: Pioneering Feminists

In the early seventies, feminist social critics within the women's movement began questioning the prevailing images and roles of women within the family and society as well as the types of research and the dominating discourse in science – first in sociology, then in subjects like linguistics, history, psychology, anthropology and political science. They were pioneers, which means that they had to face solitary fighting, loneliness, and isolation from other women and men (Wagner 1985, pp. 215–25). Feminist geography pioneers in the German-speaking academy were very much the same.

It was only in 1978, in Eva Buff's master's thesis about women's migration out of mountain regions, that for the first time in German-speaking geography, women were treated as a social group separate from men. But it was only in 1982 that a geographical journal, *Geographie heute* (1982), (re)presented women as a distinct social group with special activities and specific fields of action. Typical of the time, the topic was not about women or women's rights in Europe; rather, the focus was on women in Africa, Asia and South America, situations seemingly far away from Europe!

Even more groundbreaking, however, also in 1982, a critical article appeared in a students' journal at the university of Zürich. Anne-Françoise Gilbert and Mechtild Rössler (1982) queried the absence of women in geography. In order to address this absence among a wider audience, the two women organized a student workshop on feminist geography at the official biennial national German conference, known as *Deutscher Geographentag*, or "German Geography Day," in Münster, 1983. Also at the conference, Monika Ostheider, assistant to a well-known professor,¹ gave

a lecture entitled "Geographical Women Research – A New Theoretical Issue?" (see Ostheider, 1984). She clearly pointed out the "blindness" in geographical thinking about women's roles in society as well as the lack of women actually doing geographical research or being the topic of research. Even though located "outside" the official geographical project, women were finally becoming both research subjects and research objects.

After this conference, women students at several universities began engaging with feminist geography. And, after a short time, three feminist pioneer students had submitted the first feminist master's theses – in Giessen, Göttingen, and Zürich (respectively Buschkühl, 1984; Tekülve, 1985; Gilbert, 1985). Even though throughout the German-speaking academy – Berlin, Freiburg, Hamburg, Giessen, Göttingen, Frankfurt, Zürich, Basel, Bern, and Vienna – groups of students and individual women had become active in their departments, there were no feminist geography presentations at the national German conference in Berlin in 1985. Even though several women knew about each other, contacts were still mostly fortuitous; there was still no central organizing group. So, on German Geography Day in München, 1987, students from Frankfurt organized a second workshop on feminist geography. By the end of the workshop, participants, for the first time, made claim on an official "Working Circle on Feminist Geography."

From 1986 to 1988, at the initiative of an active group of women students under the responsibility of the two professors, Elke Tharun and Roswitha Hantschel, a series of lectures on feminist theories of science and women's mobility were held in Frankfurt. Unfortunately, after 1988, due to lack of funding, the lectures had to be given up. In 1989, these lectures were published by the students and became the first book about feminist geography in the German language (Bock et al., 1989)!

Scene 2: Weaving a Network

In spring 1988, Verena Meier, an assistant to a professor in Basel at the time, invited young women geographers that she knew were interested in feminism in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland to come to Les Emibois in the Swiss Jura in order to discuss the situation of women in geography. A dozen women took up the invitation, mostly students, some (the already designated) pioneers. Some of these women had worked for some time on topics in women and geography, but most of them were quite alone and isolated in their departments, missing out on opportunities for stimulating discussions.

In Bern, too, a feminist student group had just been emerging. So, after years of loneliness, I went to the meeting in the company of one of the students. We had hoped to find experienced researchers on women and

science espousing a clear feminist research agenda. We had hoped that we could profit from their great experience to build up feminist geography and feminist research in our own department. Oh, how we were disappointed! We found that most of the other women at Les Emibois were seeking the same things: taking great effort to collect information on a theoretical background in feminist geography. We came to realize that were still in the midst of building a feminist geography. Yet, all in all, it was a good feeling to meet other women geographers working from similar perspectives. The meeting gave us an opportunity to exchange stories and to discover how similar our situations actually were.

Most of those active at this time were geography students. None of them had a secure position at a university, or even hopes of getting one. What was happening was that all the young feminist researchers left university at the end of their studies, taking with them their knowledge and experiences, without being able to pass them along to the next generation of students. There was no continuity in research and the production of knowledge. Each student had to start at the beginning; had to "invent the wheel" once more. An impossible situation, but an example of the waste our society makes with women's experiences and women's knowledge.

It was clear that we could not continue like this. We needed women geographers in good positions in universities, as lecturers and professors to build up feminist geography and to assure at the minimum at least some continuity. However, this was beyond our power. Yet we had to do something. So, we decided that we would weave a network to meet our needs. First, we needed a place to announce national and international conferences, publish reports about ongoing research, provide references to literature, and connect women working in the same areas – simply to learn from each other! So we decided to publish a newsletter, the *Geo-Rundbrief* focusing solely on feminist geography. The first issue was published in July 1988, in Bern, because, as lecturer, I was the only one to have access to some institutional support. I published the newsletter until March 2000. In 1998, the newsletter was launched on the internet (www.giub.unibe.ch/femgeo) and has subsequently replaced the paper publication.

Second, we needed some organization to co-ordinate our activities, a group of some kind to bring us together as feminist geographers. On German Geography Day in 1989 in Saarbrücken, we held our first meeting as the "Working Circle on Feminist Geography" with presentations from students doing masters' work (*Diplomarbeiten*). After the conference, we officially announced our existence at the meetings for the German Geographical Association. We did not want our Working Circle to be a strongly organized association; rather, we wanted a sort of "geographical women's movement," held together by the newsletter and our communications. As part of maintaining the network as a group, we considered important our

presence at every German Geography Day. Since 1989 we have marked the occasion with meetings of our "Working Circle" and, since 1993, with a book display for information as well as a central meeting point. In this way, we tried to establish feminist geography through our concerns about women and our critiques of science and knowledge while, at the same time, trying to serve as a group of contacts to young feminist geographers in order to encourage them to continue their research even in their isolation.

Another important spoke in the feminist network, born at the same time, is the "Student Female Geographers Meeting." The idea for this specific type of meeting arose at a national meeting of student associations in 1989, where there had been no chance to discuss women students' issues. So women students decided to form their own informal, non-institutionalized meeting and met for the first time in June 1989, to discuss their situation as women students in geography. They decided to hold meetings every six months with varying topics about women including feminist geography. All meetings are still being held without any institutional support. At each meeting participants simply decide among themselves who is willing to organize the next one.

A network has indeed been realized. We succeeded in creating a forum about feminist science, in spreading our presence into different geography departments through our newsletter to make clear that feminist geography does exist, and in giving support to students interested in feminist geography.

Scene 3: Entering Institutions

As a small part of "entering" geography, lectures about feminist geography have been held over the past ten years in several geography departments; mostly in response to requests of students and assistants - Frankfurt, Tübingen, Berlin, Vienna, Trier, Klagenfurt, Zürich, Basel. In 1994, the first *Habilitation* in geography with a feminist approach was presented in Basel by Verena Meier. The list of geographical theses and dissertations in feminist geography continues to grow.

We think it is important to bring a feminist approach into the institutions if we want to change research in geography. For us, this means we urgently need feminist geographers as professors. Actually, not only feminist geographers, but simply women geographers, who are also under-represented in universities. Universities in the German-speaking academy continue to be an "ecosystem made by men, for men." Ruth Bördlein's (1994) work supports these observations. She found that most female university teachers in German-speaking universities are over fifty-one years old and single!

Nevertheless, we have begun to enter the institutions! Since April 1997, Doris Wastl-Walter is Professor of Human Geography in Bern. And, in February 1998 Verena Meier became Professor of Regional Geography at the Technical University of München. Both are declared feminists. And this, in spite of all the established professors in Germany who tell young female geographers who wish to pursue positions in the academy simply not to become feminists if they want to have any chance of getting a professorship!

Scene 4: Shaping the Future

As professors, Doris and Verena now have real opportunities to promote feminist geography. They include feminist critiques of scientific discourse in their teaching and developed it in lectures and trainings. Gender research programs can be presented in co-operation with professors from other faculties, such as history and sociology, which gives feminist geography more of a chance to be considered.

We want to work on a feminist reconstruction of geography (Bäschlin and Meier, 1995). In general, our research subjects remain: topics on spatial structures as the relation between access to space and social power from which results dominance or exclusion of social groups (Bühler et al., 1993); questions about the definition of "labor," production and reproduction, and the gendered division of labor, as well as the international one; and topics on social constructions of "nature" and "culture."

In summer 2000, the head of the University of Bern created an Interdisciplinary Center of Gender Studies. The chairwoman of the Center is Doris Wastl-Walter. Great news!

So, feminist geography in German-speaking countries goes its way, becoming more important in the academy.

NOTE

- 1 In the German-speaking academy, in addition to a doctorate degree, each scholar in a university must complete a *Habilitation*, a major independent research undertaking, or what is loosely equivalent to a second doctoral degree with tenure. In order to pursue an *Habilitation*, a new scholar must work with an established professor, or an "assistant to a professor." Once completed, the *Habilitation* marks the formal entry and acceptance of a scholar into the academy. Because professorships are limited in number, obtaining an *Habilitation* does not guarantee a professorship.

RESEARCH TIP

Data Sources

- Archives
- Case studies
- Census tracts
- Consumer artifacts
- Diaries and journals
- Documents from societies, institutions, organizations, and associations
- Ethnographies
- Focus groups
- Folklore
- Genealogies
- Graffiti
- Icons
- Interviews
- Landscapes (natural and built)
- Life experience
- Music
- Oral histories
- Photographs
- Place names
- Popular media
- Questionnaires
- Surveys
- Video

Last, but not least, be creative and innovative in the types of data you use for your feminist analysis!

2

Making Space for Personal Journeys

Mary Gilmartin

I want to draw a map, so to speak, of a critical geography and use that map to open as much space for discovery, intellectual adventure, and close exploration as did the original charting of the New World – without the mandate for conquest.

Morrison (1992, p. 3)

These are the words of writer Toni Morrison, and she uses them to open a book of essays called *Playing in the Dark*. The essays are broadly concerned with the themes of literature, race and national identity, and Morrison shows the ways in which the language of literature is used to avoid or evade the topic of race in the American context. Once I read this book while an undergraduate in Ireland, it opened a new world for me. As a young girl, I formed my vision of the United States from a strange mix of *The Waltons*, John Steinbeck, and MTV. While I knew about slavery and racism of the past, I had no sense of the ways in which racism had persisted into the present. Morrison's prose and fiction writing showed me this world. Her prose dealt with political issues as diverse as the absence of black people from American history and the future over Clarence Thomas' appointment to the Supreme Court. Her novels dealt with issues that were specific to black America, such as slavery, the Harlem Renaissance and Civil Rights, but in a way that someone like me – a young white Irish woman – could access and appreciate. Toni Morrison's work opened a space for me to explore all of these topics, and showed me the different ways in which exploration can be used for the purposes of gaining knowledge without appropriation.

When I read this passage for the first time, I was an undergraduate studying Geography and English. In Geography, we took courses in a wide range of topics: from geomorphology to urban geography; from cartogra-

Short 2 Putting Feminist Geography into Practice

Gender, Place and Culture: Paradoxical Spaces?

Liz Bondi

Feminists and feminisms have always occupied uneasy spaces within the academy. For some, the very idea of a feminist academic is a contradiction in terms because such academic necessities as taking up a position of academic authority – one whose knowledge is valued and privileged in a distinctive way – militate against the anti-hierarchical, anti-elitist egalitarianism integral to many versions of feminism (for critical discussion see for example Bondi, 1997; Friedman, 1985; Hawkesworth, 1989; Morgan, 1992). More generally, feminists have amply demonstrated that academic knowledge and academic practices are riddled with ideas and assumptions that depend upon and generate gender inequalities and biases (for classic statements about science, philosophy, and geography respectively see Harding, 1986; Lloyd, 1984; Women and Geography Study Group, 1984). Consequently, for women and men to acquire academic knowledge and to perform successfully within the conventions of academic practice, we are required to participate actively in the enactment and reproduction of gender inequalities and biases. A couple of examples will illustrate the impossibility of doing otherwise. First, if I wish to advance a feminist perspective on any academic debate you choose to name, conventions demand that I demonstrate my understanding of existing contributions, and that I give serious attention to texts widely recognized as “important” and “weighty.” In other words my contribution must be situated in relation to existing traditions, however steeped in misogyny, androcentrism, or gender-blindness these may be, and I must, in effect, restate the importance and weightiness of these traditions if my attempt to question them is to be taken seriously. Second, if I attempted to challenge every instance of gender bias I observe in my working life, I would never rest, let alone get on with the work I am paid to do. In other words, I have to compromise my commitment to feminism in all aspects of my work including the most and the least routinized.

The word “compromise” has acquired both positive and negative inflections. Positively, “compromise” is understood to entail a willingness to settle differences “by mutual concession” (*Chambers Dictionary*); negatively, it is understood as a neglect leading to “risk of injury, suspicion, censure or scandal” (*Chambers Dictionary*). This doubled quality may help to explain why the position of feminist academics is so often described as contradictory, that is as “inconsistent” or as encompassing “two positions that cannot both be true” (*Chambers Dictionary*).

This account of the position of the feminist academic prompts the question of why any of us do it! Such a question could be approached in many ways, but what I want to suggest is that the impact of these various compromises and contradictions depends upon whether they operate as binary (mutually exclusive) oppositions or as paradoxes, that is as “self-contradictory statement[s]” which may appear to be “absurd” but which might nevertheless also be “true” (*Chambers Dictionary*). Clearly if on the one hand “feminism” and “the academy” always operate as mutually exclusive oppositions those of us who attempt to straddle the two will forever be pulled apart. If, on the other hand, “feminism” and “the academy” operate within the framework of paradox, then their uneasy relationship might contain possibilities for “absurd” surprises and associated pleasures.

My argument draws directly on the practices of one feminist academic journal, namely *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, which Mona Domosh and I founded and for several years edited. Preparatory work for the journal began in 1992 and we swiftly secured the interest of publishers Cartfax, now part of the Taylor and Francis Group. The first issue was published in 1994. Mona stepped down as editor after the first four volumes and I continued for another two years, by which time a new pair of editors – Lynn Staeheli and Gill Valentine – had taken over. In this chapter I discuss some of the compromises that influenced the development and character of the journal, suggesting that these might be viewed as illustrations of feminist efforts to operate both “within and against” the academy. This inconsistent and contradictory positioning can make life difficult, and on many occasions the conflicting demands of academic conventions and feminist values deeply felt by a few individuals leaves the academy completely untouched. But I suggest that if the conflict between what it takes to operate within the academy and what it takes to argue against it can be held as a paradox, then efforts to work both within and against the academy can be fruitful. Thus, I argue that at its best *Gender, Place and Culture* can be understood as an embodiment of “paradoxical spaces” in which feminist geography is practiced creatively and productively. But I will also suggest that the journal’s capacity to operate in this way is always fleeting, uncertain, and contestable. Through

this particular focus I hope to point to some more general features of feminist academic practice including its methodology.

Gender, Place and Culture established an alternative to existing geography journals, offering instead a space dedicated specifically to feminist perspectives. When the project was first mooted, my conversations with colleagues rehearsed the pros and cons of such a strategy. Among the dangers we considered was the risk that the journal would work against the transformative challenge of feminism by reducing the flow to other geography journals of manuscripts informed by feminist perspectives, and by limiting feminist work to a ghetto that others would ignore. At the same time, there was the possibility that the journal would consolidate the place of feminist perspectives within the discipline, render feminist work more visible within and beyond the discipline, and thereby enhance the scope for feminism to challenge and transform geography.

In proceeding with the project those of us involved felt that the potential benefits outweighed the risks. I do not wish to evaluate this judgment in relation to subsequent events but instead I want to suggest that these informal discussions drew on a particular way of looking at questions about feminist academic practice, a framing characterized by a distinction between establishing alternatives to an already existing "mainstream" and transforming current practices from within the "mainstream." This framing was certainly familiar. For example, an early debate about the development of geography curricula inclusive of feminist perspectives distinguished between the introduction of new courses concerned with the geographies of women and of gender, and the revision of existing courses to incorporate critical awareness of women's lives and gender inequalities, classifying the former as separate provision and the latter as integration (see for example McDowell and Bowlby, 1983; Monk, 1985; Peake, 1983). We recognized that each of these strategies has advantages and disadvantages. Separate provision had the advantage of creating new kinds of opportunities for interaction between teachers and students with feminist leanings, often in classrooms consisting wholly or largely of women. But this approach had the disadvantage of limiting the impact of feminist perspectives to a single course and a self-selected group while the rest of the curriculum and the rest of the student body was left unchanged and unchallenged. Conversely, integration had the advantage of carrying the influence of feminist ideas to a much wider audience and promised a radical transformation of the whole of the curriculum. Against this, integration suffered the disadvantage of leaving feminist teachers and students isolated from one another. The approach also ran the risk of the radical potential of feminist ideas being neutralized by routine references to "gender" as a (largely unexamined) social category without any attempt to address the conceptual challenges associated with feminist perspectives (see Bondi, 1990a; Christopherson,

1989; and Johnson, 1989, for fuller elaboration of these processes). These pros and cons applied in similar ways to questions about a journal dedicated to feminist geography: would the existence of an explicitly feminist geography journal encourage the development of innovative and influential feminist work within geography, or would it create a ghetto in which feminist scholars spoke only to one another?

Such questions were, of course, unanswerable, and the decision to set up the journal illustrates the point that feminists make choices about how to do feminist geography without knowing what the effects will be. Since we care a good deal about those effects it is hardly surprising that feminist academic practice often feels uneasy. However, I want to suggest that the unanswerability of such questions is also, paradoxically, conducive to the creative and fruitful practice of feminist geography.

The strategies of making separate provision for feminist work and of integrating feminist perspectives into the mainstream are not, in practice, mutually exclusive oppositions. Thus, it is possible to offer specialist courses and to include feminist perspectives within "core" courses within a single program (compare Monk, 1985). Likewise most of those who publish in *Gender, Place and Culture* also publish in journals that are not explicitly or exclusively devoted to feminist perspectives. We might argue therefore that the decision to set up *Gender, Place and Culture* did not and does not restrict feminist geographers to one strategy at the expense of another. This does not mean, of course, that the existence of the journal makes no difference to the character of feminist geography or to its impact on the discipline. Rather, since these strategies are not mutually exclusive, feminist geographers can work with "both/and" possibilities rather than "either/or" choices. From a "both/and" perspective, we can use the distinction between separate provision and integration to clarify the differences between different strategies without being forced into a direct conflict between contradictory principles. And it suggests that many feminists are interested in working both "within" the academy – by integrating feminist ideas into "mainstream" outlets – and "against" the academy – by creating spaces which challenge the limits of, the "mainstream."

So our choices make a difference but are rarely if ever unambiguous in their effects. Working with an awareness of their ambiguous consequences, for example by revisiting the pros and cons of different strategies, works instead to encourage creative ways of both adhering to and contravening academic conventions. This begins to illustrate what I mean by working within a paradoxical framing of the relationship between feminism and the academy. I would also suggest that the asking of unanswerable questions is productive. In this instance it heightened awareness of the impact of our decisions and in so doing it may have helped to ensure that, collectively, feminist geographers sustained both the strategy of separate provision and

the strategy of integration. One of the broader issues to which this points is that posing unanswerable questions may often be a useful methodological strategy. This runs counter to influential conceptions of science which claim that decisive testability is the hallmark of good research questions (for the classic statement see Popper, 1959). But if our aim is to influence the world as well as to study it, questions that sustain critical thinking in relation to academic practices may turn out to be more effective.

Some decisions we made when we set up *Gender, Place and Culture* were of an altogether "harder" variety (and the phallic associations of the adjective are not irrelevant) in that they required us to choose between mutually exclusive possibilities. For example, we had to set up a structure within which to make editorial decisions. A key question we faced was whether we should entrench feminist principles of collaborative working by setting up an editorial collective or whether the journal should adopt the "mainstream" practice of having one or two named editors together with an editorial board. In choosing the latter we were well aware of the pros and cons of both, for example the potential that collective working would make for slower progress as against the risk of creating something in which only a minority of feminist geographers consider themselves to be involved. (Contrast this decision with the collective approach adopted by such journals as *Feminist Review*, *Feminism and Psychology*, and *Frontiers*.) Several other decisions also led to the adoption of conventional practices rather than alternatives, for example in setting up arrangements for reviewing manuscripts, where we adopted a traditional double-blind system (see Bondi, 1998).

It might reasonably be argued that the structures adopted by *Gender, Place and Culture* conform very closely to "mainstream" academic practice: beyond the subtitle of the journal there is little if anything to suggest any significant departure from, or challenge to, the pre-existing norms of refereed journals. Some might argue that this does not matter; all that matters is that the content of the journal fulfils its explicit commitment to be a journal of feminist geography. But feminists have long insisted that the means influence ends so that how people (authors, referees) and material (written texts) are treated in the production of the journal necessarily affects the end result. Given the relatively small size and highly interconnected nature of academic communities it is likely that the views of prospective authors about how they are treated will be communicated to potential authors and so influence the eventual content of the journal, suggesting that the practices of the journal are of considerable significance. So how should the adoption of conventional structures be understood?

Did we compromise (in a neglectful sense) feminist principles in pursuit of academic acceptability? There are some indications that we did. For example, the journal has been criticized, informally if not in print, for

adhering to and reproducing conventional definitions of academic standards in which "clever" and often abstruse theorizing is valued more highly than other forms of writing. This, critics argue, sustains familiar exclusionary practices including a very narrow meaning of "international," which largely excludes feminists from outside Western Anglo contexts and especially those based in the so-called "Third World." In addition, those involved in the editing process are sometimes made painfully aware that those we interact with – authors and referees – can be quite hostile to attempts to deviate in any way from standard practices. And when the founding editors began the process of finding replacements we became more sharply aware of the way in which the reputation of the journal had been attached to us as individual academics rather than being perceived as belonging to a community.

There are also indications that we might have created something more paradoxical, or, to use the definition offered above, something "absurd," in the form of a journal that embodies both highly conventional academic practices, and, contradictorily, inescapably feminist practices. For example, while the manuscripts we received included many that took a form no different from those submitted to "mainstream" journals, there has also been a steady flow of material of a more experimental form, some of which has made it through to print (see for example Reichert, 1994; Hurren, 1998; Okoko, 1999, together with Robson, 1999; Jarosz, 1999; and Laurie 1999). Likewise, notwithstanding the rejection of some manuscripts, those submitting papers have generally received a good deal of encouragement sometimes via the generous reports provided by referees and sometimes from the editors themselves. This has led to the publication of a substantial number of excellent articles by postgraduate students and other "less experienced" authors. More generally I would argue that it is in the communications between editors, referees and authors that the journal has made a small, uneven, but potentially significant contribution to modifying academic practices. To claim that such shifts in practice create sufficient self-contradiction to be viewed as paradoxical may verge on the grandiose, but if feminism is vital to our practices as well as to our concepts then it is in these unpublicized and apparently routine activities that its impact is likely to be felt. The connection with wider methodological concerns is clear: feminist research practice requires that we attend carefully to the relationship between those positioned as "researchers" and those positioned as "research subjects," "informants," "interviewees," and so on. Rarely, if ever, are the decisions we make clear cut, but unless we think about these details we will undoubtedly reproduce dominant forms of knowledge production.

Drawing on Gillian Rose's (1993) discussion of the politics of paradoxical space, Caroline Desbiens (1999) has argued that efforts to reach

“beyond” the limits of geography may risk removing feminist challenges from the discipline as it is known and practiced. Both Rose and Desbiens offer tools for thinking and therefore producing knowledge in ways that subvert from within. My contribution here complements such efforts by focusing on some of the “nitty-gritty” activities that make up academic practices. Processes of journal publication are an integral part of these practices.

RESEARCH TIP

Feminist Relationships

- Accept that relationships will not always be harmonious.
- Maintain awareness of complicity in relations of oppression.
- Dispense with expectations when assumptions surrounding rapport dissolve.
- Remember that difference and sameness can be both challenging and rewarding.
- Be sure to have fun!

5

Paradoxical Space: Geography, Men, and Duppy Feminism

David Butz and Lawrence D. Berg

In this chapter we attempt to trace some of the contours of the often fraught – and certainly controversial – relationship(s) between men and feminist geography. In particular, we wish to examine some of the ways that men who participate in feminism as feminist geographers are positioned by contradictory and problematic discourses of masculinity, femininity and academic knowledge production. We draw on poststructuralist perspectives in order to deconstruct binary distinctions between male/female (as ostensibly “natural” embodied positions within the sex/gender system) on the one hand, and masculinity and femininity (as socially constructed subject positions for men and women) on the other. Like Judith Butler (1990), we claim that the distinction between sex and gender is a social construction that produces the very effect it claims to describe. The sharp distinction between sex and gender is a logical result of what Butler calls a “regulatory fiction” that is naturalized through “performativity” – a consistent repetition of behaviors that create an illusion of a natural and “real” gender distinction. Therefore, rather than separating sex from gender, we treat them as part of the same system of patriarchal and heterosexist domination.

We have developed the concept of “duppy feminism” as a key part of our discussion of men and feminist geography. The phrase “duppy feminism” is adapted from the term “duppy,” which is used throughout the Caribbean to describe a variety of sly and malevolent ghosts (Johnson-Hill, 1995). The notion of the duppy helps us to think about the malicious ghosts of masculinism in ways that resonate with our own experiences of both contesting and unwittingly reproducing masculinism and sexism within geography. We feel that the ideas of duppy feminism aptly describe the position of male academic geographers who are at once committed to the theoretical, philosophical, and practical tenets of various forms of