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Gender and Geography

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gain key allies in their efforts to prepare for, mitigate, and respond to the risks and potential devastation associated with environmental hazards.

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See also **Environment and Development; Feminist Environmentalism; Feminist Environmentalist Geographies; Feminist Political Ecology; Gender and Nature; Political Ecology; Vulnerability, Risk, and Hazards**

Further Readings

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GENDER AND GEOGRAPHY

The geographical analysis of gender, or simply gender geography, has experienced significant growth since its origins in the 1970s. This field of study has developed from early research on spatial patterns of women's activities to more recent analyses of how spatial processes are linked to gender identities and feminist methodology. Gender and other social relations have been incorporated into nearly all areas of the discipline and brought feminist perspectives to issues such as urban planning, globalization, and, more recently, geographic information science (GIScience).

Gender geography seeks to analyze how gendered social processes are linked to space, place, and scale. In this discussion, gender is defined as a social construct mediated by various axes of power that include race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. The social construction of gender has often been

compared with sex, which refers to the biological differences between men and women. Geographic analyses of gender underscore how this and other social categories are manifest differently across space and are instrumental in shaping the physical and built environment. Moreover, gender is associated with power relations and access to resources that affect mobility patterns such as commuting and migration as well as divisions of labor in the household and workplace. *Feminist geography*, a term that is increasingly used in connection with gender geography, also entails elements of praxis or engagement with research in a way that incorporates political action and practice. By exposing social and economic inequalities in the workplace, households, and other areas of society, for example, feminist geography has sought to challenge oppressive forces and provide alternatives that include incorporating women's and gender issues in research projects and advocating for social change that empowers marginalized people. In sum, gender geography has expanded the horizons of geographic inquiry to explore alternative perspectives on spatial dynamics, social processes, and power relations.

Evolution of Gender Geography

Early scholarship in gender and feminist geography provided an important critique of traditional assumptions concerning gender roles and the unequal status of men and women in society. Starting in the mid to late 1970s, studies examined how gendered space affects women's employment, commuting, daily time-space patterns, and other common geographical themes. This early work focused on the differences between men and women as explained by gender roles and relations. For example, gender roles profoundly affect labor market participation and commuting patterns for women as they tend to have greater responsibility for household and caretaking tasks. Consequently, limited employment opportunities affect their ability to hold well-paying, full-time, and more secure jobs.

Studies such as these raised a series of questions that launched both theoretical and empirical research on the intersections of gender and geography. One of these projects developed out of Marxist geography, which is based on critical



inquiry of class, capitalism, and uneven development. Radical and socialist feminists have engaged in debates about the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy as separate or interrelated systems. Drawing from this Marxist perspective, feminist geographers such as Jo Foord and Nicky Gregson argued from a realist perspective that gender relations between men and women are built on the necessary conditions of biological reproduction. This position was criticized as ignoring how capitalism affects gender relations. Other dimensions of Marxist feminism developed alongside Walby's *Theorizing Patriarchy*, whereby patriarchal relations are seen as linked to structures in advanced industrial societies that contribute to inequalities between men and women. Examples of these structures include men's exploitation of women's unpaid household labor, segregation in the workplace, and state policies that privilege men. Overall, the issues raised by Marxist and other socialist feminists in geography expanded the scope of and infused gender perspectives into the discipline.

Additional contributions of gender geography in these early decades involved international research on the status of women in countries throughout the world. This research includes empirical analyses of migration, urban planning, and rural development issues. Detailed case studies and maps comparing urban and rural areas, the First and Third Worlds, and regional socioeconomic conditions drew attention to the spatial patterns of gender relations and the status of women. Women's employment activities vary widely throughout the world (data provided in Table 1). This representation of women's involvement in the formal economy raises important questions about scale, accuracy of aggregate data, and alternative measures of economic activity.

The unequal status of women in the discipline through the late 1980s partially explained the lack of attention to gender issues in mainstream geographic research. In a landmark article published in the early 1980s, Janice Monk and Susan Hanson took the discipline to task for failing to consider "half of the human in human geography" and for its masculinist base. This omission was partially explained by the underrepresentation of women among faculty and students in the

discipline and the subsequent lack of research on women's and gender issues. Monk and Hanson and other feminist geographers argued that increasing the number of women in the discipline is bound to improve the amount and quality of scholarship on gender and geography.

Early efforts to address the omission of gender-based research were grounded in analyses of urban and economic geography. A central theme in this literature was the spatial and social separation of home and waged work, which associated the private sphere with women and the public arena with men. Gender-based research contributed to these analyses of the spatial patterns of urban space from early industrial to postmodern cities. The division of public and private space in urban areas provides an interesting comparison of different cultural contexts. In Islamic cities, for example, women's mobility and presence in public spaces are more restricted than in Western ones. Recent feminist analyses of gendered spaces in the city and at work also challenge the social and spatial binaries of paid labor in the workplace and domestic labor in the home. Home-based work, for example, is an important income-generating strategy for many women and thus merges the productive and reproductive spheres. These and other alternative economic practices destabilize mainstream views of the sociospatial separation of home and work.

Social Difference and Gender Geography

The late 1970s and early 1980s marked an important shift in the approach of gender geography in response to critiques about its exclusion of non-Western perspectives and the dominance of white, Western, and middle-class biases in feminist studies as a whole. Third World and non-Western feminism challenged Western feminism to include other social categories such as race, ethnicity, age, and sexuality. Additionally, rather than situating these categories merely as empirical measures, feminist scholars writing about the global South and race were urged to examine the complex intersection of multiple social identities that contributed to discrimination and inequality. Researchers also questioned the "naturalization" of these



<i>Country/Region</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Country/Region</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Country/Region</i>	<i>Total</i>
Qatar	1	Armenia	23	Afghanistan	40
Kuwait	4	Georgia	24	Congo	42
Palestinian Territory	4	El Salvador	24	Turkey	42
Saudi Arabia	5	Sudan	25	United Kingdom	42
Iraq	5	Azerbaijan	25	Zimbabwe	43
Puerto Rico	6	Yemen	25	Togo	44
United Arab Emirates	6	Tajikistan	26	Canada	44
France	6	Pakistan	26	Mongolia	44
Oman	8	Jamaica	26	Vietnam	45
Jordan	8	Honduras	26	Brazil	47
Bahrain	8	Romania	26	New Zealand	47
Belgium	9	Czech Republic	27	Nepal	48
Peru	10	Albania	27	Australia	49
Libya	10	Finland	27	Benin	50
Algeria	12	Norway	27	Ghana	50
Reunion	12	Fiji	27	Gabon	50
Israel	13	Namibia	27	Guinea-Bissau	51
Japan	13	Paraguay	27	Mauritania	51
Korea, South	13	Costa Rica	27	Papua New Guinea	51
Cuba	14	Uzbekistan	27	Denmark	51
Macedonia	15	Turkmenistan	28	Comoros	52
Lithuania	16	Nicaragua	28	Congo, Dem. Rep. of	52
Bosnia-Herzegovina	17	Uruguay	28	Central African Republic	53
Croatia	17	Mauritius	28	Somalia	53
Greece	17	Germany	28	Ethiopia	53
Trinidad and Tobago	17	Slovakia	28	Madagascar	53
Chile	17	Tunisia	29	China	53
Venezuela	17	Colombia	29	Bangladesh	53
Hong Kong, SAR	17	Malaysia	30	Myanmar	54
Egypt	17	Philippines	30	Senegal	54
Singapore	18	Sierra Leone	31	Gambia	55
Ecuador	18	Swaziland	31	Thailand	58
Bulgaria	18	Guatemala	31	Malawi	59
Ireland	19	Morocco	32	Chad	59
Dominican Republic	19	Cyprus	32	Zambia	60
Sri Lanka	19	Sweden	32	Bhutan	60
Korea, North	20	Mexico	33	Niger	62
Panama	20	South Africa	33	Guinea	62
Estonia	20	Nigeria	34	Mozambique	62
Slovenia	20	Indonesia	34	Mali	63
Spain	21	Netherlands	34	Kenya	64
Latvia	21	Portugal	35	Eritrea	65
Belarus	21	India	35	Burkina Faso	66
Russia	21	Lesotho	35	Angola	67
Ukraine	21	United States	35	Cambodia	68
Syria	21	Botswana	36	Tanzania	70
Guyana	22	Austria	36	Uganda	70
Argentina	22	Hungary	37	Laos	71
Kyrgyzstan	22	Cameroon	37	Burundi	80
Italy	22	Cote d'Ivoire	37	Rwanda	81
Poland	22	Haiti	37	Djibouti	-NA
Moldova	23	Bolivia	37		
Iran	23	Liberia	38		
Kazakhstan	23	Switzerland	39		
Lebanon	23	Cape Verde	40		

Table 1 Percentage of economically active females, ages 15–19, 2005

Source: Adapted from Population Reference Bureau, World's Youth 2006 Data Sheet, <http://prb.org/Datafinder/Topic/Rankings.aspx?sort=v&order=a&variable=32>.



categories in geographical realms of the landscape, everyday language, and spatial practices.

Additionally, other aspects of social difference were incorporated into empirical studies about the journey to work for African American and Latina women, women's experiences throughout the life course, and the performance of sexual identities in place. This research was strongly influenced by poststructural approaches that question the notion of a unified subject and explore the limits of hegemonic discourse. Poststructural theory uses the method of deconstruction to destabilize the hierarchical and oppositional categories that form the basis of Western rational scientific thought. Poststructural feminism has contributed to this field of inquiry by deconstructing the dichotomous categories of male/female, culture/nature, and productive/reproductive labor. Likewise, feminist geography helped advance nonessentializing critiques of the construction of gender and space.

The application of poststructural feminism in geography has been strengthened by the work of J. K. Gibson-Graham's feminist critique of political economy. This groundbreaking research examines how capitalism is part of a hegemonic discourse that has marginalized other noncapitalist forms of economic activity. For example, barter activities and other nonmarket forms of exchange are valid and often sustainable practices in many household and community economies. According to Gibson-Graham, these alternative economic activities open up spaces of resistance in the context of hegemonic capitalist oppression.

Postmodern feminism also created opportunities to critique essentialist views of society and dominant notions of objective truth. In particular, postmodernism's rejection of totalizing views of the world and of progress associated with modernity is consistent with feminism's critique of hegemonic theory and practice. Certain feminists, however, object to postmodernism's refusal to ground critique in the solid foundation of uneven power relations, especially those power relations embedded in oppressive patriarchal structures. In contrast, feminist perspectives on the diversity of representation and truths subscribe to an antiesentialist position where gendered identities are fluid, contested, and negotiated.

Gender Geography and Postcolonial Feminism

Since the early 1990s, efforts to broaden critical perspectives in gender geography drew from postcolonial feminism. According to this approach, regions in the global South once dominated by mostly European colonial powers remain influenced by relations and discourses of powers that stem from Western forms of thinking and politics. For example, the political systems, economic transactions, and cultural practices such as language and religion in many parts of the global South reflect the legacy of European colonization. Under colonialism, these dominant power relations often suppressed local, indigenous forms of knowledge and social relations, including those that affected the status and roles of women. Postcolonial feminism analyzes how patriarchy was shaped by and affected colonial politics and social identities surrounding gender. In many colonial societies, women were placed in submissive positions or not given access to land or property rights under European-ruled administrations. This approach also explores the role of white women who participated in the colonial project as travelers, military personnel, and writers. Journals and travel logs by colonizing women are often diminutive of colonized women in ways that dwell on racial and other discourses of difference. Postcolonial feminism thus disrupts the dichotomies of colonizer/colonized and male/female by recognizing the shifting positions of the subject.

Part of the postcolonial project also entails acts of resistance that challenged the colonial system and questions Western feminism. Subversive interactions between colonizers and the colonized transformed the nature of this unequal power relation and in some instances empowered the colonized to assert their autonomy or gain certain rights. Building on this strategic resistance, some women in the global South have critiqued the idea of feminism as inappropriate for their experiences and perspectives. "Womanism" provided an alternative approach that captures the politics of women's interests and experiences in the global South. Within this approach, issues concerning motherhood and matriarchy have a unique and distinct meaning in many of these societies based on cultural and material practices.



Gendered Transnational Migration

More recent contributions of feminist geography's work on globalization address transnational migration. In this framework, both permanent and temporary migration patterns are affected by gender roles and identities. For example, migrant women take on different roles from men based on the intersection of gender relations in their countries of origin and in the host countries. Studies demonstrate that ties to both places remain important aspects of their livelihoods, social networks, and political organizing. For example, in parts of Asia, women may be more constrained due to restricted mobility, while they are free to travel and commute to work in a European host country. The identities of immigrant women are thus connected to the dominant (host) culture yet complicated by the values and gender relations in their own culture.

Likewise, issues of citizenship and subsequent rights to work and live are restricted for immigrants in many industrialized countries. Thus, concepts such as social and political boundaries, mobility, and production of space raise important questions for feminist researchers studying transnational migration. Feminist studies on the exploitation of women as domestic servants and sex workers, for example, describe the prevalence of often oppressive situations and the basic violation of human rights experienced by these women. Geraldine Pratt's work on Filipina migrants in Vancouver, Canada, explores how these immigrant women's bodies are constructed through their positions as caregivers and, in some cases, undocumented workers. Feminist geographer Melissa Wright also analyzes the violence directed at migrant women in her research on workers in Mexico's *maquiladoras*. Their representation as cheap and docile has contributed to official reactions that minimize the high rates of murder and rape of factory workers in these areas.

Gendered Bodies

The embodiment of power and social identity extends to other areas of gender geography. In this area of research, the scale of the body provides a space or context to explore not only social identity but also spaces of resistance and empowerment. Performance of these social identities

takes place in the body through dress, behavior, and other forms of social expression. Judith Butler's work on gender and performance has been followed up by many feminist geographers who refer to the body as actively involved in the production of subjectivity. Thus, the body is not merely a biological entity but a product of a particular social and cultural context. Michel Foucault expanded this work by theorizing the body as a point of inscription where discourses are represented. From a gender perspective, scholars examine how bodies are marked as male and female through practices and lifestyles such as makeup, physical exercise, and posture.

The field of queer theory and geographic research on sexuality and space has greatly expanded this conceptualization of the body and social representation. In particular, geographical analyses of queer studies approach the body as a site of resistance in efforts to destabilize the dichotomy of a heterogeneous norm. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender identities and spaces represent important alternatives to heterosexual relations, challenging the dualisms that construct masculinity and femininity as dominant social relations. Research on sexuality and space has addressed a broad range of issues concerning urban politics, gay and lesbian activism, representation and identity, and time-space studies. This field also employs deconstructivist methods of analysis that represent a transgression of heteronormative relations and binaries that oppress nonheterosexual people.

Methodology

The theoretical frameworks and empirical studies discussed above are influenced by methodological approaches in gender geography. These approaches incorporate feminist perspectives in the research process, exploring the positionality of researchers and research subjects, as well as critically reflecting on "the field" as a place of research. Through strategic selection of research topics and emphasis on certain methods of inquiry, feminist geography critiques positivist research for its claim that research can be objective, value-free, and unbiased. In contrast, gender geography recognizes that research is a subjective process that entails biases concerning



the questions asked, conceptual approaches, and methods of analysis.

Feminist methodology also challenges unequal power relations in the research process by destabilizing the relationship between the researcher as "expert" and the participant as informant. These dynamics are considered exploitative and hierarchical by feminist scholars. Debates within the field of gender geography have also raised interesting issues about the use of quantitative and qualitative methods. Some scholars pose questions about whether or not one can "count" or quantitatively analyze issues pertaining to gender relations and feminist inquiry.

Finally, feminist methodology uncovers important dynamics and relations concerning spatial and social processes through a variety of methods such as interviews, focus groups, visual analyses, and participant observation. These methods often empower and provide a voice for the subjects of research and other marginalized voices. Innovative approaches have been used in feminist geography to implement the possibilities of resisting dominant, hierarchical dynamics in the research process. Among these are methods that allow researchers to work with individuals and groups in marginalized communities. For example, using ethnographic methods, Richa Nagar and her collaborators in rural India have conducted activist work with nongovernmental organizations on rural development. This research raises questions about personal identities and the sociopolitical positionality of the institutions in which they are situated. In addition, Nina Laurie works with communities in South America on gender and livelihoods. Her research questions the unequal dynamics often presented in projects in the global South that involve academic researchers from the West. Thus, feminist methodology is an important component of feminist geography in its role of challenging hegemonic assumptions about the research process, providing alternative means of gathering and analyzing data, and incorporating activist or agendas in research.

Many of the themes in feminist methodology highlighted above have affected how feminist geography has contributed to GIScience. For example, work in critical GIScience incorporates social issues of power in the design and implementation of this technology as well as in how data are analyzed.

Likewise, feminist perspectives demonstrate how users of GIScience technology and its applications have been affected by social identity such as gender and particular subjectivities or biases in the research process. Mei Po Kwan and other feminist researchers in this field argue that GIScience can be used to deconstruct binary analyses and construct critical perspectives on sociospatial processes. Recent feminist scholars call for GIScience to be practiced in a more reflexive manner, opening up discursive spaces for alternative visions of the technology and its applications.

Examples of innovative feminist GIScience include Sara McLafferty's work on breast cancer in Long Island. This project involved cancer victims, policymakers, public health officials, and GIScience practitioners, who developed extensive maps and data in an attempt to reveal causal factors. Although challenges arose, the project was an attempt to empower women and communities affected by the disease with information and regulation of possible environmental hazards. Another example of feminist GIScience research is Kwan's work on time-space geographies of women in the urban areas of Portland, Oregon, and Columbus, Ohio. She documents the mobility patterns among women of different ethnicities as they undertake employment activities, household responsibilities, and nonemployment travel. Some of this work involves innovative GIScience techniques such as three-dimensional visualization.

The Future of Gender Geography

In sum, gender geography has developed tremendously since its early focus on women's activity patterns. The growth in this field has borrowed from and contributed to critical analysis of the gendered processes that affect the spatial dimensions of political, economic, and social change. Future directions of research in gender and geography will bring continuing attention to diversity and alternative identities as essential elements in sociospatial processes. An important component of this work will be to continue to explore the intersection of various scales from the body to the global arena. Additionally, the recent growth in feminism and GIScience promises to develop even further as gendered perspectives and methods enhance geospatial technologies. Finally, the



emphasis on activism and social change will lead to growth in the relevance and progressive impact of research in gender geography. This research will in turn strengthen efforts that challenge hegemonic and oppressive tendencies across cultural and political boundaries.

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See also **Body, Geography of; Feminist Environmental Geographies; Feminist Environmentalism; Feminist Geographies; Feminist Methodologies; Feminist Political Ecology; Gays and Lesbians, Geography and/of; Gender and Nature; Identity, Geography and; Masculinities and Geography; Sexuality, Geography and/of**

Further Readings

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others. Mutually reinforcing, conceptions of gender and nature are inextricably intertwined. Geographers' interest in these two concepts has been driven by an interest in exploring these connections and, perhaps more important, by efforts to destabilize the assumed nature-given categories of man, woman, and nature.

The term *gender*, as used in contemporary social theory, emerged as part of this denaturalizing impulse. Gender is generally understood to be a social category that can be distinguished from the biological (or nature-given) category of sex. Thus, early feminist theorists delineated gender as a system of meaning that objectifies women, rendering them passive, immobile, and closer to nature. Men in contrast are constructed as agents. Through their gradual subordination of nature, men have been portrayed as on the side of civilization, their historic role being to free humanity from its natural constraints. This system of meaning naturalizes patriarchy through a particular understanding of nature: It places transformative energies in the hands of men as master subjects. In contrast, recognizing gender as a social category suggests that it is open to change. Put at its simplest, even if I am a man, I do not have to act in masculine ways. As this example shows, sex is generally viewed as inescapable: Nevertheless, in recent years, the sex/gender distinction has itself been called into question. This division, it is argued, is a mirror of one of geography's most deeply engrained binaries, the distinction between nature and culture. Within this system of meaning, nature has been framed as the essence of something: It is immutable and historically constant, as opposed to culture, which is viewed as a product of civilization. Questioning the reliance of the sex/gender distinction on both hetero-normative assumptions and dubious dualisms, feminist theorists have sought to historicize and contextualize sex in the same way as gender, showing it to be as much a social construction as the latter. In many respects, this echoes much of the work within critical studies of nature in which long-standing assumptions about the essential characteristics of nature have been progressively undermined. It also builds on a shift from epistemological to ontological questions. Sex, it is argued, is produced, constructed, and performed in ways not dissimilar to nature.



GENDER AND NATURE

Gender and nature are two of the most powerful concepts through which our understandings of the world are shaped. They are central to the framework of meanings through which people tend to view themselves and (human and nonhuman)