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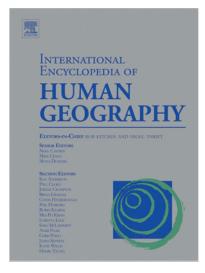
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Feminist Groups within Geography

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Glossary

Feminism It has many different meanings across space and through time; therefore, we can speak of many feminisms, each with its own history, geography, and central problematic. 'Western' feminism typically includes: liberal feminism, which focuses on equal rights for women, especially in the paid labor force; standpoint or radical feminism, which argues for a challenge to patriarchy by valorizing feminine characteristics that have been relegated to inferior status within masculinist social norms; and feminisms that focus on difference, which take an explicit interest in the processes by which our identities as gendered individuals are produced. Feminist Group For purposes of this article, refers to an organization, society, or other group of academic geographers whose research and work advances feminist and/or gender geography, or women's status in the discipline of geography.

Gender Generally refers to the socially constructed characteristics of femininity and masculinity, or what might be called the social organization of sexual difference. In some societies, no differentiation is made between the terms 'sex' and 'gender'. In other contexts, gender is understood to be in contrast with sex, with gender referring to socially defined gender behaviors, characteristics, and identities, and sex referring to the natural biological differences between women and men. Judith Butler has argued, however, that the notion of two sexes is itself a product of the gendering process - in her words, the 'regulatory fi ction' of two genders - and therefore, that the gendering of bodies themselves as masculine or feminine must be open to analysis. Moreover, because gender is understood to intersect with other axes of social difference (race/ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, geography, and so on), we can say that numerous gender(s) (masculinities and femininities) exist, not simply two, and that there are dominant, hegemonic ones, and subordinate ones.

Introduction

In taking inventory of the organizations and societies through which information about feminist and gender geography, or women's status in the discipline of geography, is discussed, supported, and disseminated, one immediately confronts the many layers of social organization that limit or make possible a feminist 'group' in geography. The larger political context of feminism and the question of what constitutes an important or worthwhile women's or gender issue varies considerably from place to place, as does the type of geography practiced in universities and research centers around the world. Shifts in gender politics are fundamentally relevant to the kind of geography practiced, and this, in turn, to the types of networks and communities of geographers that are created, and for what purposes.

The 'waves' or stages of women's liberation movements often align with the purposes and goals of feminist groups in geography. Today, we see simultaneous efforts worldwide to both improve women's visibility and status as geographers, informed by the tenets of the midtwentieth century 'second-wave' women's liberation movement in the West (the struggle for equal rights for women), as well as promotion of research on women and gender that is informed by what some call third-and fourth-wave feminisms. The latter are underlain with new understandings about how gender and other social identities and differences are produced in the first instance, and with social justice concerns that reach beyond 'women's lib'.

Moreover, the capacity for like-minded feminist geographers to group themselves together and share information via technology, conferences, publications, and so on is deeply embedded within uneven economic development around the world. In addition, there are networks of signifi cance around the world whose work contributes to feminist geography though they are not necessarily comprised of geographers, for example, in sub-Saharan Africa. Even within North America and Europe where formal organizational structures for feminist geography are well developed, feminist geographers group themselves and network informally in countless ways.

Within this context it should be noted at the outset that for practical reasons, this article does not include much discussion of the many feminist NGOs, informal networks, and other groups of feminists whose work contributes to feminist geography but who are not affi liated with a geographical organization or society. Let it also be acknowledged that Anglo-American hegemony in the feminist geography academy, English as the *lingua franca* in publication outlets, the question of what constitutes useful feminist theory for challenging material inequalities, and so on are some of the many issues that confront feminist geographers as they attempt to build a transnational feminist praxis through feminist geography groups. Some feminist groups, such as the IGU Commission on Gender and Geography, frequently bring such transnational issues to the forefront of their work, whereas these issues receive little play in others.

The following outlines feminist geography groups active on the contemporary landscape. These often mirror places where gender and geography courses are taught at universities and/or where feminist geography has become a relatively mainstream branch of geographical research and scholarship. Active feminist geography groups can thus be noted in the US, UK, and Canada; in Spain and many Western European countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland; and in Japan. Feminist geographers in Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, parts of Africa, Israel, and Brazil, among others, tend to work with like-minded individuals outside of geography's more mainstream organizations and structures.

International Groups

IGU Commission on Gender and Geography

The Commission on Gender and Geography of the International Geographical Union (IGU or Union Géographique Internationale), based in Brussels, Belgium, represents the main, if not the only, feminist geography group whose mission and purpose is international in scope. The IGU itself, designed to initiate and foster international cooperation in geographical study and research was formally established in 1922, though Congresses had been meeting since 1871. Of its numerous commissions and study groups, the IGU's Commission on Gender and Geography is a group of 350–400 geographers from approximately 60 countries in all parts of the world. The Commission organizes several meetings each year and maintains its intellectual network through academic publications, newsletters, and its website.

One of the main ways the Commission sustains international networks and collaboration among feminist geographers is through the hosting of workshops and paper sessions at IGU Congresses, as well as symposia outside the Congresses. Gender Commission participation in IGU Congresses began in Sydney, Australia in 1988, and since then have had a presence in Beijing (1990), Washington, DC (1992), Prague (1994), Havana (1995), Den Haag, the Netherlands (1996), Lisbon (1998), Seoul (2000), Durban, South Africa (2002), Glasgow (2004), and Tunis (2008). The 2004 Congress in Glasgow featured daily sessions organized on gender themes.

Since 1989, the Commission has also co-sponsored symposia outside of the IGU Congress sites in combination with other commissions and study groups. These include a symposium on 'Women and work' in Sao Paolo, Brazil, in 1991; one on 'Gender and environment' in Legon, Ghana, in 1995; 'Women in the Asia-Pacific region' in Singapore, in 1997; 'Beyond tolerance: social and spatial coexistence' in 2002, in Tel Aviv; and in Rome, in 2003, a symposium on the theme of 'Gendered cities'. Scores of other programs, workshops, and symposia have been held in other places in other years. For the 2004–08 period, the central theme of the Commission was 'Crossing borders', with events held in Zürich, Switzerland; Taipei, Taiwan; and Tunis, Tunisia. The 'crossing borders' theme focused on international migration and transnationalism on a global scale, among other issues.

The Commission also supports international feminist geography study and research through a number of publications, including its 'Working papers series' (35 have been published to date), and newsletter. The Commission's newsletter is an important venue for international communication – it reports individual and group 'news from around the world', lists important publications on topics in feminist and gender geography, announces programs of study and conferences and events throughout the world. Janice Monk compiles this newsletter, and has done so twice a year since 1988. Janice Monk is one geographer who has made invaluable contributions connecting feminist groups worldwide, particularly through her work in the IGU and as editor of the Gender Commission's newsletter.

The Commission's steering committee is meant to include representatives from all major regions of the world, in order to foster worldwide communication and participation in geographical study and research. Monk (2007) outlines the history and current networks that have developed within the IGU Gender Commission, noting its success in making connections internationally, though questioning how and to what extent the Commission actually fosters 'worldwide' communication and participation. Heaviest participation is from Europe (especially Spain and Italy), Anglophone North America, and the Asia Pacifi c, with major absences of participants from Eastern Europe, East Asia (except Japan), Africa (except South Africa), and Latin America (except Argentina). Monk emphasizes the significance of technology and geography's infrastructure in any location in shaping international communication. That noted, the Commission's website highlights the value of bringing together scholars from different parts of the world. The Canadian scholar Linda Peake notes that:

[m]eeting new colleagues from all parts of the world made me too acutely aware of the stereotypical ways in which I was still thinking. It allowed me the opportunity to listen, first hand, to what non-Western geographers thought of North American and Anglo-European geography: that it was preoccupied with theory, but more importantly, theory built upon concepts that often had little applicability to their everyday lives. Judit Timár, from Hungary, likewise noted that:

[d]iscussions that showed us that some ideas worked out in advanced capitalist countries cannot be applied in other regions spurred us to rethink some terms and concepts [such as production-reproduction and masculine city-feminine suburb].

Society of Women Geographers

The US-based Society of Women Geographers (SWG) is a professional and social organization established in 1925 by women who were accomplished explorers (Marguerite Harrison, Blair Niles, Gertrude Shelby, and Gertrude Emerson Sen). At that time, no organization existed to encourage women in geographical exploration and research and to share women's achievements and knowledge. The Society interprets 'geographer' broadly, and has grown to include women from allied disciplines such as anthropology, geology, oceanography, and ecology: its website declares that these are women who 'love adventure ... and who meet to share discoveries and adventures'. About 20% of the SWG memberships are academics. Janice Monk has written on a number of women who worked at the New York-based American Geographical Society in the mid- twentieth century and who held SWG offi ces, delivered lectures, encouraged and supported women's movement into geography as a career, and advocated for women's research to be included as geography.

The Society's organized groups are located in New York, Washington, DC, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Florida. In addition, members at large are distributed throughout the US and corresponding members live overseas. Meetings, held regularly during the academic year in the larger groups, provide members a forum for presenting the results of their travels or work, and a social atmosphere in which to exchange information informally. The entire Society meets triennially. The Society's records, archives, and library are maintained at its international headquarters in Washington, DC. The headquarters also houses a museum displaying the work of Society members, and bestows a number of awards for women who have made distinguished contributions to knowledge about the world.

National Groups

Subsequent discussion organizes feminist geography groups at the national scale, and focuses primarily on groups that are affi liated with larger geographical organizations.

United Kingdom

One of the most active feminist geography groups is the Women and Geography Study Group (WGSG),

organized in the 1970s as an informal group and then as a 'working party' within the Institute of British Geographers (IBG), the then professional organization of academic geographers in the UK. The 'working party' became a formally recognized 'study group' within the IBG in 1980s, and eventually a 'study group' of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS)/IBG when the RGS and IBG merged. The group's aims are to encourage the study of the geographical implications of gender differentiation in society and geographical research from a feminist perspective; and to encourage and facilitate the exchange of information and ideas with reference to research and teaching in these areas. (An earlier mission of the group was to work to improve the position of women within the discipline of geography, but that was omitted from the group's stated mission in the late 1990s.)

The WGSG published their fi rst book in 1984, Geography and Gender: An Introduction to Feminist Geography, and both this one and the later one, Feminist Geographies: Explorations in Diversity and Difference (WGSG 1997) were published under the name of the group rather than individual authors, with royalties paid to the group. This was an explicit attempt to foreground the feminist value of cooperation. In 2004, the WGSG also published a CD ROM, Geography and Gender Reconsidered. The group publishes a newsletter, maintains a website, and sponsors sessions at the annual RGS/IBG conference. It also organizes occasional study weekends. Among other such groups in the UK is a feminist geography reading group at Edinburgh University, similar to the informal reading groups or research clusters that have evolved at many institutions worldwide.

United States

Two feminist geography groups are affi liated with the Association of American Geographers (AAG). The Committee on the Status of Women in Geography monitors and attempts to improve and enhance the status of women in the profession, through programs such as career counseling and mentoring. The Geographical Perspectives on Women (GPOW) specialty group of the AAG is one of the largest such groups of the AAG, with over 500 members in 2007. The purpose of the group is to promote geographic research and education on topics relating to women and gender, investigate ways in which gender is geographically constituted, and understand differences between lives of men and women in different places. The group has an active listserv for communication among members, Geogfem, although as with most such lists, one need not be a member to join. GPOW publishes a newsletter, maintains a website (which links to a bibliography of feminist geography scholarship), sponsors gender and feminist geography-related sessions at the annual AAG meetings, bestows a number of awards, and

hosts receptions for feminist geographers, mostly honoring feminist geography books published during the year. GPOW has recently added an 'international liaison' position to its board of directors in an attempt to make better connections between AAG members and feminist geographers internationally.

A number of more loosely affi liated groups support feminist geography in the US. The National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) has a women's special interest group that provides awards for research in geography education by women graduate students. Among other initiatives, this group helped publish the Historical Calendars of Women Geographers in 2005 and 2006. The regional women's group of the Association of Pacifi c Coast geographers also provides travel grants and prizes to women students, though not solely for feminist work. Also, a number of 'supporting women in geography' (SWIG) chapters exist across the USA, typically associated with individual universities (such as the original group at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of California-Los Angeles, and Pennsylvania State University). A Canadian chapter is also active at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. SWIGs are loose associations of students, faculty, alumni, and community members who seek to promote the participation of women in academic or professional geography, via training, career development, resources networks, and through personal support. These goals are pursued through a diverse range of strategies, and operating norms vary signifi cantly from group to group. Attempts are underway at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to create a Global SWIG network, via a listserv called 'swig-global', designed to keep people in contact with one another and facilitate the planning of joint events.

Canada

Like GPOW, the Canadian Women and Geography Study Group (CWAG), of the Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG), sponsors conference sessions, social events, awards, a newsletter, a listserv (cwag@geog. ubc.ca), and a website. As a group, the CWAG also administers the Suzanne Mackenzie lecture, whereby a feminist scholar is invited every 2 years to present the plenary lecture at the annual CAG conference.

The stated aims of CWAG are to provide a forum for people interested in issues of access, equity, and the wellbeing of women in geography; and for those whose research is linked to questions of gender as they relate to class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, nation, and physical ability. As such, the purpose of this group has vacillated between a study group for feminist research, and a support and advocacy group for women geographers. In 2004, the group surveyed its members on 'who we are and where we are going'. Respondents noted that members are united by shared research interests, common struggles (such as achieving tenure), and connections to academia. Among other things, students noted a greater desire to participate face to face at CWAG functions, but are limited in fi nancial resources to do so. Travel grants, low cost opportunities to connect with other members, and informational resources were sought most. Faculty responded that they maintain standing in the group 'to keep abreast of new research, keep in touch with others in the profession, and to know who is working on what'. Connections sought by both faculty and students were noted to be personal as well as professional. Through the survey, the group also discovered that 'female geographers' feel less at home in the organization than do feminist geographers, which the former hoped could be resolved through the hosting of additional informal social events.

Antipodes

New Zealand/Aoteorea feminist geographers have been at the forefront of postcolonial feminist work in Anglophone geography, refl ecting the presence of issues about race, colonialism, identity, and power in New Zealand. Feminist geographers working especially in the department of geography at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, Zealand, have been key to this development. In addition to their extensive contributions in feminist research, the New Zealand feminist geographers have published a number of articles about feminist geography in their country. Without the large membership base of an organization such as the AAG or CAG, feminist geography groups in New Zealand and Australia today function on a more informal rather than formal basis. There are many active feminist geographers in both places, and they informally 'group' themselves professionally and socially.

Western Europe

Spain has a long-standing feminist geography group located at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, under the leadership of Maria Dolors Garcia-Ramon. The group has an offi cial designation as a formal research group within the university, and as such has a different organizational structure than those in the Anglophone world. The group has taken an active leadership role in feminist geography worldwide, organized an array of conferences, and published works of feminist geographers from Spain and elsewhere. The Barcelona group's fi rst conference was held in 1986, a regional meeting of the IGU, which was followed by many subsequent events including an international conference on feminist geography in February 2006. Publication of the conference papers appears with Belgeo (2007).

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Information on the active, German-language feminist geography group linking Germany, Switzerland, and Austria can be found in the digital newsletter Feministiches Geo-Rundmail, started in Bern in 1988 and published four times per year. The newsletter offers calls for papers, conference and event announcements, information on degree programs, lists of publications, relevant links, and discussions of topics of interest (such as the status of gender studies at various universities). Gender and geography study groups are active in all three countries, and several articles have appeared (in English) on German-speaking feminist geography and feminist geography groups.

Bäschlin (2002) has written on the history of German feminist geography groups. There were no central organizing groups until 1987 when students from Frankfurt organized a feminist geography workshop, the result of which was an offi cial 'Working Circle on Feminist Geography'. The Circle then held its fi rst conference in 1989 in Saarbrucken, articulating its desire for a 'geographical women's movement'. It has met at every German Geography Day since 1989. Women students formed their own informal group to discuss their situation, holding meetings every 6 months, and without any formal institutional support. According to Bäschlin, research projects of German feminist geographers include topics on spatial structures from which results dominance or exclusion of social groups; questions about the definition of 'labor' and the gendered division of labor; and social constructions of 'nature' and 'culture'.

Sybille Bauriedl outlines the debate about feminist geography in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. She notes that many of the younger German students studied in British or Scottish universities, attended the IBG conferences, and participated in its WGSG. As a result, she observes, "there was a direct transfer of the British debates into German-speaking feminist geography." Eventually, several subnetworks emerged among students, for example, a post-structural feminist geography group, and at their initiative, reading weekends with Doreen Massey emerged between 1999 and 2004.

Finally, a network of feminist geographers funded by the European Union for graduate teaching – known as Erasmus – brought an array of universities together for 9 years, 1990–98. Coordinated by Joos Droogleever Fortuijn, the network comprised of individuals from six universities in fi ve countries (Britain, Spain, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Greece). They organized intensive courses on gender and geography each year, in Durham (1991), Barcelona (1993), Athens (1994), Roskilde (1995), Durham (1996), Amsterdam (1997), and Barcelona (1998). Fortuijn (2002) notes the problems the group encountered, however, when the majority of the materials available for the courses were from an Anglo-American perspective. In the Netherlands, other kinds of organizations sponsor feminist geography work, such as the Emancipation Section of the national professional organization of planners – NIROV. This was an active group of female academics and professionals in geography, planning, and architecture who organized seminars and workshops, and published books and brochures, on gender issues in planning and housing.

Eastern Europe

Timár and Jelenszkyné (2004) document the small number of feminist geographers working in Hungary today (perhaps only two or three), and the absence of any formalized feminist geography groups there. One journal issue, approximately 10 articles, and one textbook chapter have been produced by feminist geographers in Hungary to date. They argue that this situation is similar to that of other Eastern European countries.

One shared feature of postsocialist countries and the Commonwealth of Independent States is the strength of an applied, empirical type of economic geography, with little value attached to gender and feminist geography. One of the explanations for this is the pattern of feminism itself in Eastern Europe. Within the socialist countries, the gender equality 'declared' by the state made it diffi cult for feminism to flourish. Moreover, when women's and gender studies did appear in Eastern and Central Europe in the 1980s, the state-sponsored version of Marxism was of little help as a critical tool. Today, feminist geography in Hungary has less interest in the body and gendered identities more typical of the West, than in the serious gender inequalities produced by the social relations of class politics produced especially during the transition from socialism to capitalism.

Voiculescu and Lelea (2003) discuss the situation of feminist geography in Romania. Here again, the authors argue that it was not until after 1989 that scholars began to acknowledge that women's and gender problems had not been solved by communism. Today, there are a number of researches published, and at least one course on gender and geography (at West University, Timisoara), but little in the way of formalized feminist geography groups.

Africa

Awumbila (2007) outlines feminist geography in Anglophone African countries, and argues that gender equity has been acknowledged, since the early 1990s, as key to sustainable development. Higher education courses in women, gender, and place have increased since that time, as has networking among feminist scholars and activists. In sub-Saharan Africa, feminist geography and gender and geography courses primarily appear in the Anglophone countries of Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda. In Kenya, there are no organized feminist groups in geography; most feminist geographers are members of other feminist groups such as the Association of African Women Researchers.

Monk (2007) overviews the importance of the IGU Commission on Gender and Geography, for developing feminist geography in Africa. The Commission held a training workshop in Ghana in 1995, for example, and two IGU Gender and Geography meetings have been held in South Africa – in Pretoria in 1995 and in Durban in 2002. There appear to be no explicitly feminist geography groups in South Africa, although many academics focus their research on feminist and gender geography. Other affi liated groups work on similar problems and issues, for example, the International Labour Research Group is engaged in and with feminist groups locally and regionally.

Israel

Blumen and Bar-Gal (2006) discuss the situation of feminist geography and feminist geography groups at meetings of the Israeli Geographical Society (IGS). The fi rst gender and geography session at an IGS meeting was in 1992; yet, today only about three individuals identify themselves with gender and feminist research, much of this is related to planning. The authors assert that the conference itself is an important node in the potential for feminist geography groups to take shape - 'the conference serves as an important informal meeting place of real people' - though the gender composition of the speakers is uneven, women speakers have signifi cantly lower prestige than men, and gender segregation of knowledge in the various subfi elds of the discipline is apparent. Due to the common perception that women are more closely aligned with their social group than with each other, their marginalization as a group remains concealed.

Asia

The Southeast Asian Geography Association (SEAGA) does not support a distinct feminist geography group. Yeoh and Huang (2007) overview gender and geography in Southeast Asia, in the countries of Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Cambodia, arguing that the type of geography practiced in the region does not lend itself well to development of feminist geography groups. While women's and gender studies programs and centers are vibrant in the region, geography is 'a poorly resourced, mainly descriptive, conservative, task-oriented subject valorized primarily for training teachers for school geography and producing policymakers who can contribute to national socioeconomic development'. Strategies to legitimize and strengthen women's and gender studies have included the establishment of networks, such as the Feminist Research Network (FEMNET) in Thailand.

The Association of Japanese Geographers also does not have a formal feminist geography group, but a group of feminist geographers have nonetheless been working and publishing together since the late 1990s. Participation in the IGU Gender and Geography Commission is also high, mainly as an outgrowth of the conference held in Seoul, Korea in 2000. According to Hiroo Kamiya: "We have tackled housing problems of Japanese single working women, socioeconomic conditions of one-parent families, and women's role in the Japanese management system." The group has published Urban Space of Single Women in Japan (2004), and a recent issue of the Geographical Review of Japan (2006) was devoted to 'Residential choices and housing problems of working women in Tokyo'. The group has also published an article in Geographische Rundschau International, and the Gender Atlas of Japan. Their common concern lies in contemporary Japanese women within the context of globalizing world economy.

Latin America

Among the Latin American countries, feminist geography is most alive in Brazil and Argentina, owing to the strong ties to the Barcelona group. Cross-Atlantic lectureships between geographers in Barcelona and Buenos Aires, among others, have especially nurtured the development of gender and geography in Argentina since the 1990s.

Feminist geography in Brazil and Argentina was shaped primarily by working class activism and local and global political-economic currents, and remains situated within a type of geography that is positivist and empirical. Special journal issues have been published and meeting sessions organized in feminist geography, but the fi eld remains to become institutionalized in curricula and professional organizations. In Brazil, there are no feminist geography groups within the Association of Brazilian Geographers; however, feminist geographers work within a Research Group on Urban Analysis linked to the Ministry of Education's National Council for Technological and Scientifi c Development.

Conclusion

Uneven development of feminist geography and feminist geography groups worldwide is apparent. Feminist geography groups are most active where the production of research on women, gender, and feminism has become mainstream within larger institutional contexts, in universities, and within other geographical circles. Modest advances have been made recently by feminist geography

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groups in places where they heretofore were absent, most notably expressed through journal issues devoted to feminist geography, through courses taught in gender and geography; and through links with women's and feminist NGOs. The diversity of feminist geography and thus the extent of formal or informal feminist geography groups refl ects the tremendous diversity of ideals, practices, obstacles, and goals of geographers in various places; and these in turn must be understood with respect to the type of knowledge production valued at the local and national levels.

See also: Feminism and Work; Feminism, Maps and GIS; Feminism/Feminist Geography; Feminist Geography, Prehistory of; Feminist Methodologies; Feminist Political Economy; Possibilism.

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