Chapter 2
Situating Gender

Liz Bondi and Joyce Davidson

Introduction

Over the past three decades, feminist geographers have challenged entrenched processes through which the discipline of geography has produced and reproduced inequalities between women and men. Importantly, this work has considered how geography is taught, and practices of academic labor, as well as the substance of research. Thus, for the pioneers of feminist geography, key tasks have included addressing the neglect of women, challenging misrepresentations of women, and insisting on the salience of gender as an axis of social differentiation and inequality, in teaching materials, within the academic workforce, and in geographic research (Hayford, 1974; Tivers, 1978; Monk and Hanson, 1982; McDowell, 1983, 1992; Women and Geography Study Group, 1984).

One of the most important effects of feminist geography has been to unsettle taken-for-granted assumptions about women's and men's "places" in the societies, communities, organizations, and relationships within which we live and work. Thus, feminist geography has opened up questions about ways in which spaces and places—from bathrooms to call centres, from urban parks to teaching spaces—are experienced differently by different people, and come to be associated with the presence or absence of different groups of people (Naim, 1997; Burgess, 1998; Longhurst, 2001; Belt et al., 2002). While gender is one salient dimension in these experiences and associations, so too are age, class, ethnicity, and many other factors. Consequently, bringing issues about gender into geography has entailed much more than attending to differences and inequalities between women and men. It has also prompted much reflection on what the categories "women" and "men" mean, and on the concept of gender, in the context of social identities and social relations more generally. One expression of this has been growing interest in a diversity of "masculinities" and "femininities"; that is, in different ways of being men and women (Valentine, 1996; Ainley, 1998; Lauric et al., 1999; Longhurst, 2000).
As feminist geographers have worked to enable and ensure the inclusion of women, and of gender issues, in the literal and figurative maps geographers use and produce, so deficiencies in these maps and the associated map-making techniques — tools of the trade — have become apparent. Indeed, what might appear to be the discipline’s most fundamental concepts have tended to remain at least as unquestioned as gender. As Massey (1992, p. 66) has put it, conceptual discussion of “space” “never surfaces [within geography] because everyone assumes we already know what the term means.” Consequently the project of feminist geography has been as much about rethinking core geographical concepts like space and place as about rethinking gender and its relationship to space and place.

It is important to emphasize that this chapter does not provide stable, singular definitions of the concepts space, place, and gender. Instead we show how feminist geography has enabled new ways of thinking about, and thinking with, interconnections between these terms. Nor do we offer an exhaustive review or history of feminist geographical usage of the concepts of space, place, and gender. Instead we outline and illustrate two approaches evident within the rich literature of feminist geography. It is our hope that readers will find that this selective way of reflecting on key concepts in feminist geography provokes fresh thinking on themes and issues within and beyond the subdiscipline.

The first approach to space, place, and gender we discuss has its origins in Doreen Massey’s (1984) highly influential analysis of the dynamic interplay between social relations of class and the spatial organization of production. This approach conceptualizes space, place, and gender as interrelated, mutually constitutive processes. Neither gender identities nor places are stable, fixed, or given. However, neither are they freely chosen or easily transformed. Instead the dynamic interplay between space, place, and gender is subject to inertia and “stickiness.”

The second approach to space, place, and gender we discuss shifts the focus from the persistence of dominant versions of masculinity and femininity to points at which limits may be reached and breached. It has its origins in Gillian Rose’s (1993) description of paradoxical space. This approach analyses the relationship between space, place, and gender in terms of contradictions that can render everyday experiences — especially women’s experiences — fraught and even tortuous, but through which radically different possibilities can also be glimpsed.

Sedimenting Gender

The term “place” is often thought of as referring to a bounded entity, containing a unique assemblage of characteristics, and within which people forge profound attachments and identities. This definition links “place” to subjective, meaningful, and emotional experiences, whether at the scale of a home, a neighborhood, or a country. It has provided a point of departure for a good deal of humanistic geography, including studies of people’s “sense of place” (Ralph, 1976; Eyles, 1985). Standing in implicit contrast to this, space is often thought of as abstract, objective, and defined by geometric and locational properties such as distance, latitude, and longitude. This conceptualization has been foundational for the “scientific” and “spatial analysis” associated with quantitative perspectives in geography (Berry and Marble, 1968; Harvey, 1969).
These definitions of space and place have been subject to extensive challenge and criticism by feminist (among other) geographers. The notion of places as producing shared experiences and the notion of space as abstract geometry both conveniently ignore the myriad ways in which differences of gender, age, class, "race," and other forms of social differentiation shape people's lives. To cite one example, the places and spaces of homes and streets are often experienced very differently by gays and lesbians compared to heterosexuals (Valentine, 1993, 1996; Johnston and Valentine, 1995). These conceptualizations of space and place also fail to recognize how social relations shape geography. Interconnections between places do not necessarily lead to homogeneity, but instead produce what Doreen Massey (1994, p. 23) has described as "social relations stretched over space." Put another way, "geography matters" in the constitution of gender, class, and other social relations (Massey and Allen, 1984). According to Massey (1984) the uniqueness of a place can be understood as the expression of a particular mix of social relations which stretch far beyond that place. She argued that places could be understood in terms of "the combination of their succession of roles within a series of wider, national and international, spatial divisions of labour" (Massey, 1994, p. 14). This interpretation conceptualizes social relations, places, and their interconnections as layers deposited one on top of another, and, because of parallels with the way in which sedimentary rocks are laid down, it is often described as a "geological metaphor."

Massey's original formulation focused overwhelmingly on class relations. An early and influential extension of the approach to matters of gender was presented by Linda McDowell and Doreen Massey (1984), who showed how nineteenth-century economic change in Britain helped to produce a mosaic of regions differentiated in terms of gender as well as class, and how these patterns have influenced and been reshaped by twentieth-century economic restructuring. For example, in nineteenth-century colliery villages in northeast England women were almost completely excluded from employment in coal mining (but see John, 1980) and from a wider culture of mining work associated with labor organizations and social (working men's) clubs. Women, including wives and often daughters too, undertook very heavy burdens of unpaid domestic labor, which was essential to reproduce coal miners' labor power on a daily basis (until the middle of the twentieth century when proper shower and laundry facilities were finally provided by employers). In the context of men's and women's different relation to waged labor, nineteenth-century pit villages became intensely patriarchal, with households overtly ruled by men, and women seriously disempowered in all realms of their lives. Women and men led very different lives, generating highly contrasting versions of masculinity and femininity, in which, McDowell and Massey (1984, p. 132) argue, "male supremacy became an established, and almost unchallenged, fact."

The cotton towns of northwest England present a very different story. Here women became paid workers in the new nineteenth-century textile factories. Although excluded from paid work as spinners soon after cotton production moved from domestic settings into factories, significant numbers of women secured waged work as weavers in the cotton mills (Hill, 1982). A strong tradition of women's involvement in waged labor was associated with working-class women's political organization through trades unions and suffrage campaigns (Liddington, 1979). Notwithstanding unequal pay and other forms of gender inequality, women's
relatively high degree of autonomy and financial independence generated different versions of femininity and masculinity from those of the pit villages of northeast England. In a variety of ways, women challenged traditional assumptions about the gender order, prompting some commentators to fear that the "home [was being] turned upside down" (Hall, 1982, p. 17).

McDowell and Massey (1984) examined the legacies of these nineteenth-century patterns in relation to twentieth-century economic restructuring. They noted how, by the 1970s, it was in the former mining areas of northeast England that "homes [were] being 'turned upside down'" (McDowell and Massey, 1984, p. 139). A steep decline in employment in coal mining prompted the introduction of government incentives for employers to relocate to the region. Although it was men who had lost their jobs, many of the incoming industries employed mostly women. Research by Jane Lewis (1984) demonstrated how women in this region had become an attractive pool of unskilled labour, often for assembly-line work, in part because of the very absence of any tradition of waged labor or union organizing. Prospective employers viewed them as cheap, flexible, and, perhaps above all, "docile" workers. Thus, gender relations in which women had been seriously disempowered relative to men had produced images of femininity that became a significant factor in the changing economic geography of the UK. A long established, dominant pattern in which men were wage-earners and women were unpaid domestic workers began to be reversed because employment opportunities for men were subject to relentless decline, while for women wage-earning opportunities increased. The impact on gender relations within and beyond households has been complex. Men's involvement in childcare and other domestic responsibilities has not increased in proportion to the loss of employment (Wheelock, 1990). Instead, as in many other areas, women combine paid and unpaid work, while the lack of job prospects for young men from educationally and materially disadvantaged backgrounds has prompted concern about a "crisis in masculinity" (Campbell, 1993; McDowell, 2001).

The decline of the cotton industry in northwest England resulted in job losses of a similar magnitude to those suffered in northeast England but did not prompt the same scale of government intervention to attract new employers into the region. One important reason for this was that many of the jobs lost were lost to married women who did not appear in the unemployment statistics because the tax and benefit system in place at the time defined such women as dependent rather than unemployed. Moreover, McDowell and Massey (1984) argued that the long tradition of women's employment, and of their involvement in political movements, made them significantly less attractive as a pool of labor for the "footloose" industries relocating during the 1960s and 1970s (also see Glucksman, 2000). In such ways, gender divisions and gender ideologies in different places contribute to the dynamic processes through which "social relations are stretched over space." McDowell and Massey's (1984) analysis emphasized the dynamic effects of the development of different forms of gender relations and femininities in different places. They pointed to the influence of perceptions, assumptions, and stereotypes about women in particular places (such as their "docility"), as well as to geographically differentiated histories of gender divisions of labor. During the second half of the twentieth century, regional variations in women's rates of labor market participation in the UK converged towards levels similar to men's participation rates.
SITUATING GENDER

(Lewis, 1984). However, as Simon Duncan and Darren Smith (2002) have shown, spatial differences in how women combine wage-earning and domestic responsibilities persist, demonstrating the influence of local gender cultures in the production of masculinities and femininities (also see McDowell, 2003).

Analyses such as these have demonstrated the uniqueness of particular places. However, this does not mean that places or place-based identities are stable, singular, or essential. On the contrary, the accounts we have discussed argue that places and place-based identities are unbounded, open, porous, and fluid entities that are always “in process” in relation to numerous other places (Massey, 1994). Parallel arguments have been advanced in relation to gender identities; indeed, we have already drawn attention to the multiplicity and mutability of femininities and masculinities.

The notion that identities are fluid and mutable is powerfully and problematically reinforced by consumer cultures, which frequently market goods and services in ways that suggest consumption will confer desirable identity attributes on the consumer. Social theorists from a range of disciplines, including geography, have argued that consumers buy products in an attempt to “buy into” a particular lifestyle or “look,” that consumers are, in effect, “identity shoppers” (Goss, 1992; Langman, 1994; Gabriel and Lang, 1995). Zygmunt Bauman (1988, p. 808), for example, has described the consumer as someone who is engaged in “self-construction by a process of acquiring commodities of distinction and difference”; that is to say, buying an identity. We interact with consumer products, as part of what has been called a reflexive project of self, asking questions of ourselves such as “Am I like that? Could that be (part of) me?” (Falk and Campbell, 1997, p. 4). Consumer cultures have, therefore, fostered the idea that identities can be more or less freely chosen, and that people are individually responsible for making themselves the people they are. Feminists have, of course, drawn attention to the highly gendered nature of the marketing processes associated with consumerism, which often propagate deeply masculinist ideals of femininity, and we return to this theme in the next section. However, the point we wish to emphasize here is that conceptualizing identities in these terms is diametrically opposite to the view of identities as essential, natural, persistent, and immutable attributes of places, gender categories, age groups, and so on. Feminist geographers have been equally critical of both points of view, and the argument that places and gender are fluid and mutable therefore needs to be tempered by an appreciation of the “stickiness” of gendered and place-based identities.

In this context, Geraldine Pratt and Susan Hanson (1994, p. 25) have provided a useful analysis of what they call the “geography of placement,” in which they show how geography constructs differences, often generating “a stickiness to identity that is grounded in the fact that many women’s lives are lived locally.” They examined the experiences of women living in four different neighborhoods in the metropolitan area of Worcester, Massachusetts, which vary between city and suburban locations, as well as in terms of income levels, racial composition, occupational histories, and employment opportunities. They found a high degree of localization, as well as racial and class segregation, in women’s employment, linked to employers’ stereotypical views of potential labor pools. As well as contributing to the maintenance of distinct ethnic communities, the recruitment strategies adopted
by employers perpetuated assumptions about household gender relations; for example, through the establishment of “women’s shifts,” which in some neighborhoods were designed to fit between school hours, and in other neighborhoods meant night hours when children were assumed to be asleep and partners home from day shifts. Thus, in one neighborhood employers construed the “normal” household to be one in which the care of children falls entirely to women except during school hours, whereas in the other they implicitly encouraged men to take responsibility for childcare at night. Pratt and Hanson (1994, p. 19) argued that these local labor market patterns therefore help to produce “different gender identities (that) conceal around women living in different areas.” Thus, while “people may ‘travel’ globally (for example, when they turn on their televisions or when they go out to eat),” this apparent stretching across space needs to be held in tension with the intensely local character of other aspects of women’s lives (Pratt and Hanson, 1994, p. 25). Consequently, while places and gender are mutually constitutive processes that exist in dynamic relationships across space and time, the “sedimenting” of these dynamics as geographical layers produces considerable inertia or “stickiness.” Put another way, this perspective recasts attachments between people and places as both powerful and contingent, persistent and mutable.

In summary, in this section we have discussed an influential approach to the concept of space, place, and gender in which they are theorized as interrelated processes, rather than as fixed entities. Thus, gender relations and gender identities are constructed in and through space and place, and, conversely, space and place construct gender (Bondi and Rose, 2003; also see Mackenzie, 1988). The examples we have chosen illustrate this argument in relation to regions, neighborhoods, labor markets and households. While we have drawn on studies that pay particular attention to women’s employment in order to elucidate the interplay between gender, these studies also demonstrate that employment is closely bound up with the reproduction of labor power through domestic work and consumption. We have, however, restricted our attention to studies concerned with quite broad conceptions of gender. For example, although we have insisted on the multiplicity of femininities and masculinities, the story we have told has not problematized issues of sexuality, but has presumed a predominance of heterosexual households. While this is not inevitable within the approach to space, place, and gender discussed in this section, one of the key limitations of this perspective is its tendency to focus on dominant patterns rather than disruptive possibilities. In the next section, therefore, we turn our attention to an approach that is more concerned with imagining radically different versions.

Reimagining Gendered Space

In Feminism and Geography, Gillian Rose (1993) advanced a groundbreaking account of the gendered subject, conceived in terms of its positioning in what she calls “paradoxical space.” This concept entails a radical rethinking of gender, space, and the relations between, in a way that helps to explain some of the complexities and contradictions involved in women’s diverse experiences, and, importantly, to suggest new imaginative geographies. For Rose (1993, p. 139), paradoxical space “is a space imagined in order to articulate a troubled relation to the hegemonic discourses of masculinism.” In other words, paradoxical space is a dynamic and truly
different sense of space through which to unsettle and displace key assumptions underlying predominant ways of thinking about and experiencing gender. Above all, paradoxical space opens up possibilities radically different from the traditional and "transparent" spatialities associated with patriarchal accounts of gender as a stable, natural, mutually exclusive binary distinction between "Man" and "Woman." Consequently, this approach examines the ordinary, taken-for-granted spatial operation of the gender inequalities for an explicitly subversive purpose: by disclosing the gendering of dominant concepts, feminist geographers can also engage in a radical rethinking that goes beyond the limits of geographical knowledge.

Rose (1993) argued that dominant and dominating (or hegemonic) conceptualizations of space limit our ability to experience and express difference except in terms of a dualistic distinction between "Man" and "Woman." By excluding all that cannot be pressed into a gender binary, this system represents us as behaving and believing in accordance with long established patriarchal principles, and as experiencing social space exclusively in terms of a simple gender divide. Potentially subversive and emancipatory differences among women (and men) are kept out of the spatial equation, and we are stuck within a restrictive and hierarchical social space. Moreover, the real differences generated by other axes of social identity, such as age, "race," sexuality, and class, are reduced to superficial variations on a theme.

Following accounts of gender developed by feminist theorists such as Marilyn Fiske (1983), Teresa de Lauretis (1989), and Iris Marion Young (1990), Rose argued that being defined as a woman is likely to entail feeling confined in and constrained by space. Being a woman means living largely according to a geographical imagination that is masculinist in nature, that privileges and makes room for male subjects to express and impose themselves in and on their environs. In contrast, women "do not often gesture and stride, stretch and push to the limits of our physical capabilities" (Rose, 1993, p. 144). One explanation for this constrained sense of spatiality relates to women's heightened awareness of embodiment, associated with a sense of being the object of other people's (potentially evaluative) gaze that creates and strengthens the notion that space is not our own. Women, on this account, rarely claim or control space but instead are caught and confined by it.

One of the ways in which this theorization of the relationship between gender and space has been used to develop insightful accounts of gendered experience is in feminist analyses of agoraphobia. Agoraphobia is a disorder characterized by intense fear (panic attacks) and avoidance of social situations and spaces (Bankey, 2002; Davidson, 2003), and is suffered primarily by women. Agoraphobics' spatial experience can be understood as an exaggerated example of the restricted, excluded spatiality that Rose (1993) argued is typical of women's lives in hegemonic, masculinist space (also see de Costa Meyer, 1996). In a study conducted by one of the co-authors of this chapter, Joyce Davidson (2000, 2001a) has argued that the panic attacks described by agoraphobics can be understood as "boundary crises" in which sufferers cease to sense themselves as separately and securely bounded from what would "normally" be considered their "surroundings," and which therefore fundamentally threaten their sense of self and ontological security. Typically experienced in social space, these intensely disturbing experiences prompt sufferers to retreat to the perceived safety of their homes, whose walls serve to reinforce their own weakened boundaries and fragile sense of identity.
Agoraphobic respondents frequently referred to consumer spaces—shops, streets, supermarkets, and especially shopping malls—as sites most strongly associated with panic attacks. Reflecting on why shopping spaces present such acute difficulties, sufferers described the variety and intensity of the multisensory stimuli characteristic of these environments, which they argued are liable to confuse and displace any prior sense of calm for phobics and non-phobics alike (Davidson, 2001b). Shopping, especially in the mall, has been described as contradictory, even paradoxical: “it is an experience that yields both pleasure and anxiety, a ‘delightful experience’ that can quickly become a ‘nightmare’” (Falk and Campbell, 1997, p. 12). Consumer spaces are designed to capture our attention and persuade us to buy. As we argued in the preceding section, this persuasion often entails the marketing of identities. Shoppers are, in effect, bombarded with images and messages about how we might “improve” or “enhance” ourselves and our lives, playing on insecurities, actively unsettling our sense of secure boundaries in order to encourage us to “fix” ourselves up with appropriate goods and services (Longhurst, 1998). Moreover, consumer spaces are also strongly gendered. As Nicky Gregson has pointed out, “it is still overwhelmingly women who shop… just as much as it is women who form the majority of retail sales workers” (Gregson, 1995, p. 137; also see Lowe and Crewe, 1991). Shopping spaces are thus very much part of women’s spatial experience, and marketing strategies often make extensive use of ideas about gender, simultaneously addressing women as consumers and objectifying women’s bodies. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that consumer spaces stir up troubling emotions and associations for many women. For women whose sense of self is fragile or impaired, they can be incomparably difficult places to be. Thinking about space as produced by, and saturated with, traditional, and often contradictory, conceptions of gender within which women are caught and confined sheds new light on women’s everyday experiences, whether or not we suffer from agoraphobia.

Returning to Gillian Rose’s (1993) account of paradoxical space, she argued that as well as recognizing the powerful effects of hegemonic spatialities, women need to find ways in which to exercise our particular positioning for personal and political advantage. In other words, women must “insist on the possibility of resistance” (Rose, 1993, p. 153). Dominant geographies need to be challenged, and, although women are often caught in oppressive spaces, Rose argued that this capture is only ever partial. Thus, while women are trapped within oppressive, hegemonic spaces, we are at the same time excluded from these spaces on the grounds of illegitimacy, or not being a fully fledged—that is, masculine, “master”—subject. Women are thus simultaneously both “prisoners and exiles”: “No wonder,” according to Rose (1993, p. 150), “space is so tortuous for so many women.” However, this positioning—as simultaneously trapped and excluded—is paradoxical in the sense of invoking an apparently impossible combination of positions. Rose (1993) insisted that this contradiction is generative in the sense that some aspects of our identities always exceed the constitutive framing of hegemonic, masculinist space. It is in this excess that the radical, emancipatory potential of paradoxical space lies.

To illustrate the possibility of resisting dominant spatialities, we return to experiences of agoraphobia. As well as highlighting the oppressiveness and constraining effects of dominant understandings and enactments of space, place, and gender, accounts of agoraphobia contain suggestions of radically different, potentially
liberating, spatialities. In a chapter co-authored with her sisters, feminist theorist
Susan Bordo offered an insightful analysis of her own relatively brief but neverthe-
less debilitating experience of agoraphobia (Bordo et al., 1998). She described a
panic attack in a crowded supermarket, when everything felt alien and frightening
to her, “the noise, the crying children, the pushing and shoving” (Bordo et al., 1998,
p. 84). As with other agoraphobics, her experience made her long for something
solid to grab hold of. “I was stranded on the edge of an enormous [iceberg], rising
high out of the sea, perched, precarious, desperate for walls to plant my hands
against” (Bordo et al., 1998, p. 80). However, Bordo also explained how, when she
was recovering, spaces that had once radically threatened her sense of herself came
to enhance her feeling of embodied identity. “Being outide, which when I was ago-
raphobic had left me feeling substanceless, a medium through which body, breath,
and world would rush, squeezing my heart and dashing my vision, now gave me
definition, body, focused my gaze” (Bordo et al., 1998, p. 83).

The fragile relationship between self and space associated with panic can thus be
transformed into excitement. Like the child who spins in circles, manufacturing
dizziness for the delightful disorientation it creates, temporary shifts in “normal”
perspective can be liberating. To open oneself up to excitement, to learn to endure
and even enjoy the radical otherness of “disorderly” spatial experiences, is to
glimpse the potentialities of paradoxical space. As Davidson (2002, pp. 31-2) has
noted

the person who is “ill” will most likely want nothing more than to “fit in”, to conform
with society's expectations of normality ... [but] the language used by (agoraphobic)
women to express their experience is at times an attempt to transcend the dualisms
implied by, and inherent to, our species' symbolic order (Ingold, 1985). Consequently,
it may not always be helpful... to (op)press this experience back into dualistic
discourse.

Accounts of agoraphobia provide one example of how the idea of paradoxical space
has helped feminist geographers to make sense of women’s emotional, embodied,
spatial experience, and to develop new understandings of the spatial constitution of
gender. But it is important to note that agoraphobics are just one of many “groups
confronted with a sense of space as restrictive, ill-fitting, and prejudicial, and whose
experiences can be understood as calling into question hegemonic versions of spatial
subjectivity. Indeed, we are all paradoxically positioned, albeit in many different
ways, which are often closely bound up with major axes of differentiation such as
gender, class, sexuality, and “race.” As well as gender, and the means by which we might
seek to contest dominant spatialities therefore differ in numerous ways. To illus-
trate this further, we draw on discussions of sexuality, which we use to show how
dominant and restrictive spatialities can be challenged and even “breached” by sub-
ductive actions, but also how uncertain and contestable the effects of such actions

Feminist geographers have shown that, like agoraphobics, although for different
reasons and in different ways, gays and lesbians also often experience feelings of
restriction in, and exclusion from, dominant, taken-for-granted, everyday spaces.
Following arguments developed by feminist and “queer” theorist Judith Butler,
(1990), Gill Valentine (1996, p. 147), for example, has suggested that space is produced as “naturally” heterosexual through repeated, regulated, performative acts, ranging from:

heterosexual couples kissing and holding hands as they make their way down the street, to advertisements and window displays which present images of contented “nuclear” families; and from heterosexualized conversations that permeate queues at bus stops and banks, to the piped music articulating heterosexual desires that fills shops, bars and restaurants.

Thus, everyday spaces are powerfully infused with traditional, normative versions of sexuality, which impact upon all those who enter them, even if just fleetingly by “passing through.” Such spaces, which include many workplaces and home spaces as well as supposed “public” spaces of streets, plazas, and malls, are constructed as normatively heterosexual, and therefore deny and negate the very existence of “other” sexual identities. In addition to the profound and pervasive oppression of gays, lesbians, and others who do not “fit in,” and who may, literally, find that they have nowhere to go (Valentine and Skelton, 2002), the denial and negation of other sexualities leaves hegemonic conceptualizations of space undisturbed.

Of course, sexual dissidents have challenged the normative heterosexuality of space in a variety of ways. Perhaps most well known of these strategies is the carving out of alternative gay spaces in the form of gay and/or lesbian residential neighborhoods (see for example Castells, 1983; Lauria and Knopp, 1985; Adler and Brenner, 1992; Peake, 1993; Forest, 1995; Kramer, 1995; Rechenberg, 1995; Valentine, 1997). Such neighborhoods create zones in which heterosexuality is no longer normative. Spaces are produced and performed in ways that accept and celebrate alternative sexual identities, and increase the visibility of alternative sexualities. Notwithstanding the enormous importance of these effects, there is, nevertheless, a risk that these “alternative” spaces become ghettos or enclaves within which “other” sexual identities are contained, leaving the heterosexuality of all other spaces untouched. Indeed, in some instances the very existence of gay and lesbian neighborhoods may intensify the vulnerability of individuals to homophobic violence (Myslik, 1996; Namsara, 1996). Clearly, the difference between “gay and lesbian space” and “straight space” is very far from equal, exemplifying the unequal, hierarchical operation typical of many dualistic concepts, including “man/woman,” “white/not white,” as well as “straight/not straight.”

As Valentine (1996) and others (for example, Davis, 1995; Rothenberg, 1995) have shown, gays and lesbians have struggled against and refused the restrictions of heterosexist social space in other ways that are perhaps more subtly subversive of dominant conceptions of everyday space. For example, by kissing in public, gays and lesbians actively challenge the heterosexuality of space, and begin to “rearticulate the very fabric of that social space” (Probyn, 1995, p. 81). These actions help to ensure that sexual dissidents are seen outside of gay and lesbian enclavement, and such tactics have been taken further by activists such as the “Lesbian Avengers” (Valentine, 1996, p. 153), who set out to “bend” and to “queer” everyday social space, performing in ways that “rupture the taken-for-granted heterosexuality of those spaces by disrupting the repetitive performances of the mall and the shopping
street as heterosexual places and (re)imaging/(re)producing them as queer sites. By making other (non-hetero-) sexualities both visible and unavoidable, actively undermine the supposedly natural, “neutral,” and timeless heterosexuality of social space. Conceived as paradoxical — and, crucially, open to change — gay and lesbian positioning in such space can be seen as positively provocative, simultaneously demonstrating and undoing its presumed heterosexuality.

Gay pride parades and similar “spectacles” can also disrupt the status quo in complex and multiple ways, enacting what Sally Munt (1995, p. 124) has called a “politics of dislocation.” In consequence, the views of the “viewing public,” together with politicians and policy-makers, are at least challenged, if not straightforwardly changed (Johnston, 2002). Moreover, by “challeng[ing] the production of everyday spaces as heterosexual” (Valentine, 1996, p. 152), pride parades empower participants to (at least partially) break out of and reach beyond the restrictive dualistic framework of hegemonic space; participation can be individually liberating for those who have labored and learned to resist in their paradoxical experience of space by stretching definitions and limits. Gay and lesbian pride parades are thus, at least potentially, transgressive and transformative. “By numerically appropriating the streets (and surrounding transport system, car parks, pubs, parks, shops, McDonalds and so on) and filling them with lesbian and gay meaning for one day, marchers pierce the complacency of heterosexual space” (Valentine, 1996, p. 152).

Pride parades are short-lived, spectacular events. As with the creation of gay and lesbian neighborhoods, their subversive potential can be limited, defused and even co-opted through containment strategies. For example, when they are harnessed as tourist attractions, spectators are often securely separated from participants (for example behind barriers), implicitly ensuring that the former cannot be confused with, or “contaminated” by, the latter (Johnston, 2002). Thus, the paradoxical possibilities of public celebrations of sexual dissidence are not easily or straightforwardly harnessed to emancipatory ends (also see Bell et al., 1994). But, nevertheless, the repeated reimposition of dominant norms does not automatically repress or undo the unpredictable effects of these temporary “breaches” in hegemonic spacialities. On the contrary, through interventions that exploit vulnerabilities in hegemonic space it is possible to show that “space teems with many other possibilities” (Valentine, 1996, p. 154). The challenge we all face entails using the tension of our contradictory positionings to critique and undermine hegemonic space, and to reveal what lies beyond it, elsewhere. By speaking out about the complex and multiple spaces in which we live, and about the ways in which we experience space differently from each other, all of us can seek to disrupt, rupture, and perhaps partially transform the masculinist and heterosexist status quo.

In concluding this section, it is important to acknowledge that paradoxical space is a very slippery concept that risks reinscribing dualistic frameworks — for example, between “here/within,” “beyond/outside,” and “women/men” — as it unsettles them (Desbiens, 1999). One aspect of this slipperiness arises because the concept of paradoxical space refers to, and attempts to holds together, spaces of experience and spaces of imagination. Consequently, while we can perhaps glimpse the emancipatory potential of paradoxical space — as we have illustrated in relation to arophobia and sexual dissidence — we also have to work, and work hard, to realize its potential.
Conclusion

In the preceding sections we have outlined and illustrated two different ways in which feminist geographers have conceptualized gender, space, and place as interrelated terms. In conclusion we briefly discuss the consequences of these two approaches for the discipline of geography and for feminist politics.

The approach to space, place, and gender described in the section on “reimagining gendered space” exemplifies materialist analyses of geographies of gender, class, race, and other forms of social differentiation. That is, it attends to the material conditions of people’s lives, and elaborates how space, place, and gender are interwoven through which inequalities and oppressions are forged and perpetuated. In so doing, this perspective presents important challenges to the discipline of geography in (at least) two ways. First, it demonstrates the vital importance of attending to gender as a key dimension through which spaces and places are produced, reproduced, and transformed. Second, just as it helps to make visible the reality of women’s lives within a discipline that has traditionally neglected or misrepresented “half the human in human geography” (Monk and Hanson, 1982, p. 11), so too it helps to illuminate the taken-for-grantedness of dominant conceptualizations of space. More specifically, this approach advocates and develops an understanding of the dynamic, mutual co-construction of the spatial and the social, thereby challenging traditional distinctions between places as discrete assemblages of attributes, and space as abstract three-dimensional geometry.

This materialist approach to space, place, and gender offers important resources to feminist politics as well as to the discipline of geography. By attending to the geographical construction of class, gender, and other forms of social differentiation, this approach speaks to a feminist political strategy of building alliances across differences. This is of particular importance in the context of what are sometimes called “horizontal hostilities” among women — conflicts generated by affirmations of distinctive identities articulated in terms of dis-identifications, exclusions, and even, on occasion, hatreds (Fraser, 1995, 2000; Ahmed, 2002). In this context, Geraldine Pratt and Susan Hanson (1994, pp. 25–6) expressed the scope for building alliances in appropriately tentative terms:

by writing about the ways in which differences are constructed, we hope to allow groups of women, who conceive themselves as different from one another, to gain some mutual understanding; we hope, not for cross-cultural identification, but for an informed knowledge of how the conditions of others’ lives are shaped by local opportunities and in relation to each other.

However modest such hopes may be, they illustrate the profound importance of feminist geographical analyses for feminist politics.

The approach to space, place, and gender described in the section on “reimagining gendered space” exemplifies the application by feminist geographers of theories of subjectivity, including especially phenomenological and psychoanalytic theories, which in different ways problematize and analyze taken-for-granted features of everyday life (for feminist renditions see, for example, Grosz, 1994; Butler, 1997; Barthes, 1998). Although phenomenology has been drawn upon by geographers over many years (for example Raph, 1976; Tuan, 1977; Pickles, 1983;
Srothmayer, 1998) these uses have largely failed to consider (gendered) embodiment as integral to human existence. In the case of psychoanalytic theories, feminist geography has been a key route through which such ideas have been brought to bear on geographic concerns. Overall, therefore, this approach to space, place, and gender has enriched the discipline of geography by opening up and extending geographical analyses of human subjectivity (Bondi et al., 2002). It has also elaborated and invited subversive ways of working within and against disciplinary conventions by simultaneously questioning the authority of geographic knowledge, and reaching beyond that authority to generate new geographies (Rose, 1996; Bondi, 1997).

The project of reimagining space beyond the limits of a gender binary has important and enabling implications for feminist politics. As we have shown, this approach helps to explain why keenly felt aspects of women's experience are often difficult to represent by bringing into view ways in which what constitutes "knowledge" is limited. By insisting on the productive possibilities of paradoxical space, this approach invites feminist interventions at numerous sites, whether construed as central or marginal. In this context it is important to stress that the two approaches we have discussed are complementary and overlapping. By challenging the constraints of binary thinking, paradoxical space is an approach that seeks to disrupt the opposition between similarity and difference that underpins "horizontal hostilities" among women. This perspective seeks to dislodge the idea that identities (or places) are ever coherent or stable enough to provide a basis for collective action, and invites instead a creative engagement with the uncertainties, fractures, and differences that are integral aspects of all of us.

In this chapter we have introduced and illustrated two of the ways in which feminist geographers have conceptualized space, place, and gender. In so doing, we have shown how feminist geography has unleashed new creative energy for thinking about the world we inhabit. The remaining chapters in this volume elaborate some of the rich possibilities that ensue.

NOTES

1 In this chapter we focus on feminist geography as it has developed in the anglophone literature, primarily within Anglo-American contexts. There are important issues to consider about the multiple genealogies of related concepts across languages and contexts, but these lie beyond the scope of this chapter.

2 Our discussion aligns between the third person ("women" as "they") and the first person ("women" as "us") in a way that reflects our argument about the contradictory positions invoked by the idea of paradoxical space. While we belong to the broad category of "women" about whom we write, we also take up a position apart from that category as we question its limits and meanings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Davidson, J. (2000) "... the world was getting smaller": women, agoraphobia and bodily boundaries. Area, 32, 31-40.


SITUATING GENDER

doxal space. Gender, Place and Culture, 6, 79–85.
Duncan, S. and Smith, D. (2002) Geographies of family formations: spatial differences and
gender cultures in Britain. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 27, 471–93.
Forest, B. (1995) Were Hollywood as symbolic: the significance of place in the construction of
Foster, N. (1995) From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a “post-
Gregson, N. (1995) And now it’s all consumption? Progress in Human Geography, 19,
135–41.
1780–1850. In E. Whewell, M. Arnot, E. Barbel, V. Becchey, L. Birke, S. Himmelwit,
D. Leonard, S. Rudi and M. A. Speakerman (eds), The Changing Experience of Women.
Oxford: Basil Blackwell in Association with the Open University.
Journal of Geography, 6, 1–19.
London: Groom Helm.
V. I. Ensko, A.-M. Green, L. Johnston, S. Lilley, C. Lissbourn, M. Marshy, S. McEwan,
N. O’Connor, G. Rose, B. Vivat and N. Wood, Subjectivities, Knowledges, and Feminist
Geographies. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
Johnson, L. and Valentine, G. (1995) Wherever I lay my girlfriend, that’s my home: the perfor-
manace and surveillance of lesbian identities in domestic environments. In D. Bell and
Krause, J. L. (1985) Bachelor farmers and spinsters: gay and lesbian identities and communi-
ties in rural North Dakota. In D. Bell and G. Valentine (eds), Mapping Desire. London:
Routledge.
urban renaissance. Urban Geography, 6, 132–69.
Laurie, N., Dwyer, C., Holloway, S. and Smith, F. (1999) New Geographies of New Femin-


SITUATING GENDER


Rose, G. (1996) As if the mirror hadbled. Masculine dwelling, masculinist theory and femi-
nist masquerade. In N. Duncan (ed.), *BodySpace: Destabilising Geographies of Gender

Rothenberg, T. (1995) "And the old two friends": lesbians creating urban social space. In

Strohmeyer, U. (1998) The event of space: geographic allusions in the phenomenological tra-


Tuan, Y.-F. (1977) *Space and Place*. Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press.

Valentine, G. (1993) (Hetero)sexing space: lesbian perceptions and experiences of everyday

Valentine, G. (1996) (Re)negotiating the heterosexual street. In N. Duncan (ed.), *BodySpace:

and S. M. Roberts (eds), *Thresholds in Feminist Geography*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and
Littlefield.

Valentine, G. and Stiel, T. (2002) "I just felt different though for a long time I didn’t
understand why": emotional geographies of coming out as lesbian or gay. Paper presented
to the Emotional Geographies Conference, Lancaster University, September.

Wheelock, J. (1990) *Husbands at Home: The Domestic Economy in a Post-industrial Society*
London: Routledge.


sity Press.