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Altha J. Cravey

Introduction

- 1 Feminist geographical research is thriving in the United States, yet many feminists confront pervasive and complex dilemmas. What is it about the contemporary US context that is so daunting? My head spins as I try to make a list: Academic employers are abandoning intellectual ideals while imposing corporate standards. The prevailing business ethos promotes “efficiency” in academe, not feminist innovation nor critique. These pressures are acute in public universities, where most geography departments are located. In this pay-to-play situation, our feminist students compete for shrinking pools of funding. Corporate influence in academia is of course, connected to wider political and economic transformations. US leaders wage wars of aggression and create new imperial projects that literally re-map global relationships (re-imagine and re-configure global geographies). Back at home, these same so-called leaders are busy with the task of re-inventing the notion of freedom such that freedom is now about the freedom of commodities to travel wherever they may go – “free trade”. In the name of this newly enshrined freedom, our leaders dismantle social safety nets, redistribute income upwards, undermine the civil rights progress of the last few decades, and fortify hyper-masculine militaristic identities. How can feminist geographical scholars keep up with so much gendered rhetoric and violence, such geographical oscillations of power that span and connect global imperialism with malignant local consequences such as those in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina? So much violence, suffering, injustice, exploitation, and oppression; and so very much intellectual work to do!
- 2 In reflecting on this contemporary scene, it is important to remember that feminist geography was born during a time of ferment as an academic expression of the social movement of the late 1960s and 1970s that questioned, protested, and attempted to

change women's place in society. It is thus not surprising that I position contemporary feminist geography in relation to social challenges, recognizing that those challenges continue to evolve. Even as feminist research and teaching have become widely integrated into U.S. geography, I continue to believe that the greatest contemporary challenge for American feminist geographers is maintaining a political edge. Active engagement in this endeavour entails at least four distinct necessary elements. Feminist geographers must attend to the global scope of our discipline. This is not to say that all research must be international or global, simply to say that geographically extensive processes such as imperialism, grassroots organizing, transnationality, and racism call out for feminist geographical analysis. Thus, our collective body of expertise must problematize global and regional relationships as well as more proximate ones. Second, feminist researchers in the US should encourage and support collaborative research that produces multi-sited and multi-scalar geographic knowledge. Collaborative scholarly work has the potential to produce deeper insights, and more lasting outcomes, than individual efforts. Third, intellectual workers must maintain and nurture alliances with a broad spectrum of activists including feminists, anti-war, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, labor, sexuality, and environmental activists. Fourth, we must keep conversation going among ourselves about our diverse theoretical frameworks and what kinds of political projects are possible from various perspectives. That is, while our feminist theorizing and our feminist actions may be heterogeneous, we must also seek – and constantly refine – a collective feminist project.

- 3 I explore these imperatives below by turning first to a discussion of feminist activity within US-based organizations and institutions. In so doing, I acknowledge the gains that have been made over the last thirty years. I recognize that the collective political activism of feminist scholars within the discipline in the US, especially through the Committee on the Status of Women in Geography (CSWG) in the Association of American Geographers (AAG) were important catalysts for change¹. I follow this with an examination of contemporary feminist research in American geography. The field has become wide reaching across the various branches of geography, from social and cultural to urban and economic studies, international development themes, to gendered interpretations of human relations with the natural environment. It has paid much attention to theoretical and conceptual concerns, especially to recognition of diversity among women and the intersections of gender with other social differences and to the psychological aspects of life in addition to the material. It has explored epistemologies and methodologies, whether these involve approaches to field research or to feminist perspectives within geographical information sciences. Recent collections such as Nelson and Seager (2005) a compendium of over 600 pages demonstrate the range of this body of knowledge. I cannot begin to do justice to this corpus of work in a single article. I therefore have chosen to present as exemplars innovative US-based research on political geography and the specialized field of international migration research. I follow this with some concluding remarks.
- 4 It is important to note at the outset that it is difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle feminist geographical research in the United States (and in North America) from other work in the Anglophone world. English language and United States affiliations are not always accurate markers of who is doing what and where they are doing it. Geographers from outside the country participate in US meetings, publish frequently in the same journals that US scholars favor and obtain teaching positions in US universities. Some have moved back and forth between positions (or study) in the US

and Canada (and also other Anglophone countries). Such international participation may be at a substantially greater rate than in other parts of the world. It is also true that US-based geographers have had the tradition of, and often the resources for, foreign field research. At any rate, much of US and North American feminist geography is published in English and is available in US, North American, or e-journals. For all of these reasons, the following discussion of institutions – in the next section of the paper – is more specifically US-centered than the subsequent section on research.

Organizations, departments, and networks

- 5 Feminist geography has been institutionalized in novel and exciting ways in the United States. Groups such as Geographic Perspectives On Women (GPOW) and the CSWG within the AAG, and student-organized Supporting Women in Geography (SWG) groups (discussed in more detail below), as well as individual departments and particular individuals, have been highly effective at nurturing students, scholars, and innovative feminist ideas. Specific departments and programs have been able to strengthen feminist geography in a number of distinct ways. These include : partnering with Women's Studies programs ; designing feminist lecture series ; maintaining reading groups ; working to overcome hostile environments and cultivate nurturing ones ; and other creative techniques. Success is uneven to be sure ; yet feminist geography in the United States can point to several markers of progress, including the election of feminist geographers to the highest offices of our professional organizations and an indelible impact on certain fields of study such as social geography, economic geography, and migration studies. I briefly elaborate on some of these successes below.
- 6 One important site of institutional innovation is the intimate world of individual geography departments. The place-based cultures that emerge in particular units and universities can have a tremendous impact on the success of individual scholars and their scholarly output. After all, most professional geographers and most members of our professional organizations pass through a geography department. As Victoria Lawson notes “geography departments [in the US] are primarily in public universities” and are operating in “a highly competitive environment” due to rapidly increasing public sector budgetary pressures (Lawson, 2004, p. 3). While Lawson's “Healthy Departments Initiative” is not explicitly feminist, it does resonate with feminist goals. For one thing, the title of the initiative brings together two words “healthy” and “department” that many academics would not readily couple together. In framing the initiative as one concerned with “health”, Lawson raises a number of social and relationship issues that are invisible otherwise. In this way, the Healthy Departments Initiative has brought many geographers into constructive conversations about how to nurture place-based environments that will be sustainable in the current adverse financial situation, and that meanwhile sustain individual department members (http://www.aag.org/healthydepartments/healthy_content.cfm). Finally, the website, easily reached with one click from the AAG main web page identifies “diversity resources”, “communication tools”, and other resources aimed at improving departmental relationships. These innocuous-sounding resources have the potential to improve access and success-rates for feminist scholars, women in general, and scholars from underrepresented minority groups.

- 7 Certain US-based departments have been acting on their own and doing innovative things along these lines for years, often due to the persistent efforts of a feminist faculty member, or a group of dedicated graduate students. Feminist geography at The Pennsylvania State University is innovative in offering a joint PhD in Women's Studies and Geography. At the University of Minnesota, a social theory reading group has been an active part of the departmental community for several years, has published collective pieces, and has produced feminist scholars who have moved on to establish successful careers elsewhere (see, for example, Minnesota Geography Reading Group, 1996). Around the country departments have begun to specify feminist geography in their job searches, competing for scholars of "feminist geography" "gender and sexuality studies" or "gender and globalization". "Feminist geography" is sometimes the focus of an advertisement, and sometimes included in a list of possible specialties.
- 8 Feminist innovation also occurs in professional networks and organizations. Perhaps the most important organization in this regard is the feminist geography specialty group, GPOW, of the AAG. This organization is a nodal point and face-to-face forum for many US-based feminist scholars. GPOW membership overlaps and connects with international groups such as the Commission on Gender and Geography of the International Geographical Union and links as well with student-oriented groups such as locally based chapters of Supporting Women in Geography (SWIG). GPOW also sponsors annual service and scholarship awards for members, maintains a web page with numerous resources (<http://www.geography.WISC.edu/swig/groups.htm>), compiles a comprehensive bibliography of feminist research, and provides a listserv, "Geogfem", for intellectual, activist, professional, and personal interchange. GPOW sponsors a wide array of paper sessions and panels at the Annual Meetings of the AAG. At the 2006 Chicago meeting for instance, GPOW sponsored a total of 43 separate sessions. The annual business meeting of GPOW is a boisterous evening event in which senior scholars and students alike undertake the business of keeping the organization focused on feminist concerns and professional development. For the last several years, GPOW has also sponsored a wine and cheese reception at a bookstore near the meeting site to recognize new books in feminist geography. Over 200 people attended the 2006 book reception. Another group, CSWG, an arm of the Association of American Geographers (AAG), collects data on women's professional advancement, and co-sponsors panel sessions of professional development with GPOW.
- 9 The growth, proliferation and success of feminist geography organizations are evidence of continued strength, momentum, and creativity among US-based feminist geographers. It is also evidence that feminist ideas are becoming mainstream in certain contexts. Maintaining a political edge in this situation requires staying on our toes and guarding against complacency. As my opening remarks in this paper indicate, in the current political climate much urgent feminist work remains to be done. Some of it is scholarly work, some of it is advocacy work and some of it bridges the two distinct worlds of activism and scholarship. Our organizations, especially central nodal organizations such as GPOW, must be flexible enough, and adaptable enough, to sharpen and maintain the political edge of our collective project. These various institutional innovations, and diverse initiatives, have helped to facilitate a burgeoning world of feminist geographical scholarship in the US and North America.

Recent feminist research

- 10 Contemporary feminist geographical research in the US deals with many diverse substantive issues. As I have already noted, topical foci are wide ranging, including urban, culture, sexuality, health, economy, politics, environment, history, and international development (see Seager and Nelson, 2005 ; Mitchell, Marston and Katz, 2004 ; Nagar *et al.*, 2002). Feminists have also attended to pedagogy and have produced texts that can introduce students to some of the breadth of ideas in feminist geography (see Domosh and Seager, 2001 ; Moss, 2002). In this paper, I choose a few examples from this rich array to highlight some contemporary trends in US-based feminist research. I describe the impact of feminist theorizing in political geography before honing in on one topical area : migration research. As I have already indicated, there is ongoing dialogue and collaboration that brings US geographers together with other Anglophone colleagues, and for that reason, several of my examples in this section involve cross-border collaboration with feminist geographers in Canada, England, and elsewhere. Such scholarly cross-border collaborations should be encouraged and nurtured by our feminist organizations, and we must find the will to create more scholarly collaborations that cross geographical as well as linguistic borders (Monk *et al.*, 2004 ; Denman *et al.*, 2004).
- 11 One example of exemplary recent research is a special issue of *Political Geography* on “reconceptualizing the state” in March 2004 (Desbiens *et al.*, 2004). Canadian and US coordinators of this special issue expand the dialogue between the sub-disciplines of political and feminist geography in significant ways. Furthermore, the special issue is noteworthy because the authors experiment creatively with the peer review and publishing process in an effort to work cooperatively both on their individual pieces and on the overall publication of the special issue. Using “open and on-going dialogue” among authors and reviewers of the special edition, the coordinators tried out feminist editing practices that were “positive and invigorating” (Desbiens *et al.*, 2004, p. 242) and an antidote to practices of peer review and publishing that Lawrence Berg (2001) has identified as “masculinist”.
- 12 It is significant that highly original feminist work is being published in *Political Geography*, a journal and a sub-field that have maintained – for the most part – a narrow focus on electoral politics, geopolitics and other such traditional topics while resisting an engagement with gender and feminist theory. The contributors to this special issue explore power relations through multiple axes of difference. Moving “beyond state policies to their enactment across diverse social and political geographies” (Desbiens *et al.*, 2004, p. 242) allows this group of scholars to problematize geographic scale. The effect is to reveal that the state is not “a unitary object but is, rather, a set of practices enacted through relationships between people, places, and institutions” (Desbiens *et al.*, 2004, p. 242).
- 13 The papers in the special issue examine diverse topics and themes. Alison Mountz² (2004) explores the Canadian response to the arrival of a boat full of migrants smuggled from China in 1999. She uses bodily geographies to demonstrate that some processes and experiences are invisible when geographers privilege wider political scales. Mountz argues for new ways of thinking about the state through geographies at finer scales. Cindy Fan shows that the role of the Chinese state is central to a particular gendering of exploitative migrant labor regimes (Fan, 2004). Jennifer Hyndman’s³ paper (2004a)

paper develops a framework and epistemology for a feminist geopolitics and suggests that this may be a more accountable and embodied political response to international relations at multiple scales. All of these papers seek to sharpen the political edge of a larger collective feminist project and all – to some degree – succeed in making alliances with activist movements or with scholars in places beyond their own North American universities and organizations.

- 14 Staeheli, Kofman, and Peake explore a closely related set of issues in their edited book, *Mapping Women, Making Politics : Feminist Perspectives on Political Geography* (2004). Several of the contributors to the volume are North American, or based in North American universities. Other contributors are from South Africa, Australia, England, Australia, Scotland, and Switzerland. Building from and expanding upon a 1990 sketch of the “gendered agenda for political geography”, the editors and their contributors rework basic concepts of political geography in an effort to set a comprehensive agenda for a feminist political geography (Kofman and Peake, 1990 ; Nelson and Seager, 2005). It is hard to imagine that serious scholars of political geography will be able to ignore gender and feminist perspectives following the publication of this volume and the Desbiens, Mountz, Walton-Roberts collaborative special issue of *Political Geography* (2004) mentioned above. These two publications forcefully demonstrate the analytical power of gender and feminist perspectives. Patricia Martin’s paper in the Staeheli *et al.* collection further demonstrates how attention to material and metaphorical spatialities has given feminist geographers the tools to elaborate and expand feminist political theory (Martin, 2004). Discussing Doreen Massey’s concept of power-geometry (1993), Martin suggests “what is important is not just one’s location within a set of spatial relationships but also one’s ability to control or construct the sites, flows, scales, and spaces that comprise the geometry. Such geometries are political and are related to economic, political, and cultural relations. They may refer to a politics of mobility, a politics of scale, or the process through which particular places are constructed” (Martin, 2004, p. 27). The complex understanding of space, spatiality, and spatial relationships that Martin describes is precisely what gives these scholars such compelling analytical insight.
- 15 A larger and more wide-ranging collection of contemporary feminist geographical thought appears in a 2005 edited volume that brings together many English-language contributions to feminist geography (Nelson and Seager, 2005). While contributors include some individuals from outside the US, many are based in the country. The following sub-sections organize *A Companion to Feminist Geography* : contexts, work, city, body, environment, and state/nation. Editors Lise Nelson and Joni Seager include diverse methodological, theoretical, and substantive issues in this volume. The introductory essay suggests that lived experience and “the body” continue to “anchor feminist geography at the dawn of the twenty-first century” (p.1). The editors emphasize four themes in the collection. First, feminist geographers have explicit political commitments. Second, the sub field is “innately interdisciplinary” (p. 6). Third, English-speaking feminist geographers document the ways that oppressions are produced through material and symbolic spaces and places, situating the *where* questions as central epistemological pivots. Fourth, feminist geographers highlight women as an important object of study, and “‘gendering’ as a social and spatial process” (p.7). The volume introduces many debates and preoccupations of feminist

geographers and represents a landmark collection that will be a benchmark in the future.

- 16 The *Companion to Feminist Geography*, the special edition of *Political Geography*, and *Mapping Women, Making Politics* highlight the diverse theoretical perspectives and diverse topical interests that animate feminist geographers in the US. In all instances, these collections represent explicit efforts to think about *power* and to pursue feminist political projects (i.e. activist projects, feminist organizing initiatives, scholarly innovations, and social movements). To varying degrees, the authors in these recent works are engaged in a collective political project of rethinking scholarship in ways that can make a difference in women's lives, and employing discursive analyses alongside materialist ones. The *Political Geography* collection is especially compelling in the ways that the research makes visible the fluid scalar dynamics of power by linking gender analysis at global, regional, local, and bodily scales. An example from migration research explores these interscalar dynamics of power with even more spectacular results.

Examples from migration studies

- 17 The potential impact of feminist ideas is apparent in the field of migration studies, a highly interdisciplinary field in which distinct disciplines tend to pose different kinds of research questions. (Geography is no better or worse than political science or history or whatever discipline in this regard.) Although this was not the case a few years ago, most migration scholars *now* acknowledge the importance of the household, and seek to understand household decision-making. Migration scholars (and demographers!) also have embraced ideas of gender and are convinced that gender analysis of households and migration flows lends considerable insight to migration research. Feminist notions of gendered embodiment and embodied experience are not as quite as widespread as yet in migration studies and are beginning to have an impact in geography and other disciplines (Yeoh, 2005 ; Hyndman, 2004b ; Raghuram, 2004). The influence of this perspective is certainly not limited to the US ; feminist scholar Yeoh writes from Singapore, Hyndman at the time of writing for the collection was in Canada, and Raghuram from England (all cited above).
- 18 Among feminist migration geographers based in the US, the work of Rachel Silvey⁴ is exemplary for asking complex questions and probing for deeper understandings of the connections between migration, gender, and globalization. From her earliest published work, Silvey combined quantitative and qualitative data in a complimentary manner (Silvey and Lawson, 1999 ; Silvey, 2000a, 2000b, 2004b). Much of Silvey's work examines migration in Indonesia although she has also investigated contract labour migrations to the Middle East. In a 2005 chapter in the *Companion to Feminist Geography*, and a longer version in *Political Geography* (2004a), Silvey explores the experiences of Indonesian migrants in Saudi Arabia. The Indonesian state aggressively promoted out-migration of women to work as domestic laborers in a labor export program of some 70,000 Indonesian women annually in the 1990s. Using a feminist conceptualization of boundaries and borders, Silvey demonstrates the way that these migrants and their advocates have "expanded the boundaries of the nation and the household to include overseas women migrants as citizens and laborers" (Silvey, 2005, p. 141). The spaces of state regulation and jurisdiction are influenced and transformed in the process of

women's migration. Turning her attention to notions of bodily experience, Silvey deepens these insights. On the one hand, Indonesian migrants are opening new spaces of work and politics, while on the other hand they find their bodies "entrapped across greater distances" (p. 143). Silvey explores the way in which employment niches and workers' bodies are regulated by both the Indonesian and Saudi Arabian states and also documents migrant vulnerabilities to sexual/physical assault, harassment, and other abuse. In response, activists highlight migrant women's bodily vulnerabilities by drawing into public view that which had been private. One sensational and symbolic instance in 1998 involved a demonstration in front of a labor supply agency. Indonesian women gathered in this public space to hold government officials accountable. They demanded redress for devastating crimes committed by their Saudi employers; they had been raped and left pregnant in very *private* contexts and yet they moved their demands to very *public* locations (Silvey, 2005).

- 19 Silvey's paper maintains a political edge in several distinct ways. Most obvious is her attention to advocacy and activism. Less apparent, yet no less effective, is the way Silvey uses feminist insights and a relational sense of place to expand fundamental spatial categories such as household and nation. Indonesian migrants in this instance are represented (and glorified) by the Indonesian state as citizens working abroad and at the same time are entrapped within employer households that constrain and harm them. Silvey's analysis is one that attends to the global scope of the discipline of geography. Her research problem involves specific women in particular situations that are swept up in globalization processes. Her paper also shows ways in which US-based feminists can and do align themselves with activists who operate in far-flung regions.
- 20 Jamie Winders is another innovative migration scholar based in the US. She has examined the complex situation of immigrant and refugee settlement in Nashville, Tennessee (2006). Winders demonstrates that refugee experience in Nashville complicates a recent pattern of Latino migration flows to the city. Since the 1980s, Kurdish, Sudanese, Somali, Bosnian and Laotian refugees have come to the city through federal programs and assisted by religious and voluntary organizations. Latino migrant flows are also diverse and include Cubans, Colombians, and Central Americans, and the numerically dominant Mexicans. Winders documents the discursive connections between international refugees and economically motivated Latino migrants in Nashville. She suggests that the "politically visible but numerically small refugee communities and the numerically large but politically less visible Latino communities has influenced the ways that 'diversity' and 'difference' are understood and sited in Nashville, particularly vis-à-vis race, ethnicity, and belonging" (Winders, 2006). Categories such as "New Americans" "international" community, and "immigrant" community influence public discourse and politics in the city. Winders provides a compelling narrative of how these categories play out in local arenas, institutions, and relationships. She also explores the social spaces where refugees and Latinos meet and interact: urban neighborhoods and the local labor market (Winders, 2006). Contributing to a growing body of literature about migration in the US South, Winders provides insights into how this region, that had remained fairly unchanged for generations, is rapidly changing through migration. In the process, Winders raises provocative questions about what these transformations indicate for citizenship, belonging, and local and regional political transformations.

- 21 In work that parallels and resonates with some of the central issues in Silvey's and Winders' research, Canadian feminist geographers engage the experiences of Filipina domestic workers, and Guatemalan refugees in Canada (Pratt, 2004 ; Nolin, 2005). Pratt, a Canadian geographer⁵ who examines Filipina migration, shows that Filipina nannies in Canada must regularly confront a range of interconnected and layered tribulations : immigration issues, hyper-exploitative workplace conditions, loss of privacy, and sexual abuse. Through Canada's "Live-In Caregiver Program", workers from the Philippines are required to live in the homes of their employers and face spatial constraints that markedly contrast with the spatial mobility of moving half way around the world to undertake these jobs. While these workers are highly educated, their labor is cheapened through specific historical geographical processes such as the racialization of specific national ideas, and colonial and neo-colonial relationships involving the Philippines. Pratt draws on a long-term research project to offer new ways to think about feminist theory and action. In particular, she considers how it may be possible to bridge profound cultural differences in pursuit of feminist social justice goals. Pratt's feminist approach brings political economy and post-structural theory into a productive tension while highlighting the benefits of both class and discourse analysis (Pratt, 2004).
- 22 In the case of Guatemalan refugees in Canada, geographer Catherine Nolin uses a multi-method, multi-sited ethnographic approach to study of Guatemalan transnational migrants, their narratives of migration, and their subsequent efforts to build meaningful lives in Canada. These recent migrants are mostly refugees, yet are labeled with a variety of official statuses. Nolin engages scholarly debates on transnationalism and carefully demonstrates where she seeks to push these debates forward. In particular, Nolin's work highlights specific contradictions that demonstrate limits, difficulties and "ruptures" in the social relationships these Guatemalan migrants forge in a new context, tracing the way in which political violence and trauma in Guatemala inscribes contradictory "transnational ruptures" in the lives of individuals who migrated to Canada in the late 1970s and 1980s (Nolin, 2005). Nolin's research is significant in several ways. It provides a more complete picture of the Guatemalan diaspora. Theoretical contributions revolve around the way in which these transnational lives are marked by immobility and rupture rather than connection through expansive transnational social fields. One surprising finding is that many Guatemalans who went to Canada in the 1980s relied on reverse remittances (directed *from*, not to relatives in Guatemala) to sustain themselves (Nolin, 2005).

Discussion

- 23 Feminist geographical research in the United States has grown increasingly influential and innovative in recent years. Feminists are pursuing a heterogeneous project that benefits from many individual and collective actions and relationships. Long-term strength is evident in the vitality of organizations like the Geographic Perspectives on Women Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers. This group, in turn, has gained strength through collaboration with other groups and through cultivating feminist-friendly networks, organizations, and departments. Since 2000, two feminist scholars have been elected as President of the Association of American Geographers : Janice Monk in 2001 and Victoria Lawson in 2004. Monk's Past-

Presidential address (2004) focused on the gendered history of the profession. Susan Hanson, President in 1990, gave her Presidential address (1992) on the major tenets of feminist geography as these related to the discipline as a whole. Her later election to membership as one of the handful of geographers in the prestigious National Academy of Sciences speaks to the recognition that feminist geography has made an important mark in the discipline. These achievements demonstrate that feminist scholarship is no longer on the margins of the discipline in the United States.

- 24 Will US-based feminist geographers maintain a political edge as I have advocated here ? How will feminist scholars do so ? I believe this is our most pressing challenge. Our alliances with scholars and activists worldwide must reflect our commitments to feminist principles and to broader progressive ideals that are explicitly anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-war, anti-heterosexist, anti-essentialist, and pro-environmental. We must cultivate and nurture these alliances in ways that link feminists in all parts of the world (see this *Belgeo* journal issue, especially the introductory essay by Garcia-Ramon and Monk, 2007) and in ways that link intimate spaces with global, national, and regional ones.
- 25 Will we continue to find new opportunities for scholarly collaboration as Desbiens, Mountz and Walton-Roberts (2004) did, or will our affiliations in financially strapped public universities militate against these types of creative efforts ? Will we cross borders in order to reach out to conduct research and publish with scholars in other parts of the world (Monk *et al.*, 2004 ; Denman *et al.*, 2004) ? Will we learn to collaborate with activists and community organizers more effectively, and with appropriate levels of humility ? Geraldine Pratt (2004) has shown us some of the complex obstacles involved, and also documented some of the compelling imperatives of prioritizing feminist action. I hope we will take up the profound challenges of becoming fluent in new languages, exploring cultural differences and their implications, and knowing that our collective feminist project must grow and change if we want feminist geography in the US (and in North America) to remain alive and relevant. As Pratt shows, if we believe in feminist social justice goals, we sometimes must invest years of our lives in projects that may not ultimately be successful at bridging profound cultural difference. Yet we must take the challenge seriously, and struggle to build bridges of understanding especially when this effort seems most daunting.

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NOTES

1. Monk (2006) has analyzed in some detail the political work of feminists in the discipline in fostering organizational change with the Association of American Geographers.
2. Mountz is an example of a scholar who has studied in both the US and Canada and who now works in a US university.
3. Hyndman is an example of a scholar who currently holds (and formerly held) an appointment in a US university with an extended period between in Canada. She earned her first degree in Canada, her second in the UK, and her PhD in Canada.
4. Silvey has spent most of her career in the US but recently moved to Canada.
5. Pratt has held appointments in the US and Canada.

ABSTRACTS

Feminist research in the US is vibrant, diverse, and innovative. I explore practical ways US-based feminists sustain themselves, and introduce research in political geography and migration studies. Recent work in these areas expands dialogue between political and feminist geographers, and sharpens the political edge of a larger collective feminist project aligned with activists and scholars worldwide. These works explicitly consider power while pursuing feminist action. In migration studies, the impact of feminist ideas is evident in the connections among migration, gender, and globalization. I argue that the greatest challenge for US-based feminist geographers is to maintain a political edge. To do so, we must attend to the global scope of the discipline; encourage multi-sited, multi-scalar collaborative research; nurture alliances with a broad spectrum of activists including anti-war, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, labor, sexuality, and environmental activists; and creatively imagine political projects from various theoretical angles. In short, while our feminist theorizing and feminist actions may be heterogeneous, we must also seek – and constantly refine – a collective feminist project.

Die feministische Forschung in den USA ist dynamisch, divers und innovativ. In meinem Beitrag lichte ich die Möglichkeiten aus, feministische Wissenschaft in den USA zu betreiben und gebe einen Überblick über die Forschungsperspektiven Politische Geographie und Migrationsforschung. Aktuelle Arbeiten in diesen Bereichen sind durch eine Ausweitung des Dialogs zwischen politischen und feministischen Geographinnen und Geographen gekennzeichnet sowie durch eine Verschärfung des politischen Anspruchs eines breiteren kollektiven feministischen Projekts im weltweiten Verbund politisch und wissenschaftlich engagierter Personen. Machtverhältnisse werden in diesen Arbeiten und feministischen Aktionen stets explizit beachtet. Durch den engen Zusammenhang von Migration, Geschlecht und Globalisierung wird der Einfluss feministischer Ideen in der Migrationsforschung besonders deutlich. Meiner Meinung nach stellt die Aufrechterhaltung eines politischen Anspruchs die größte Herausforderung für feministische Geographinnen und Geographen in den USA dar. Zu diesem Zweck müssen wir dem globalen Geltungsbereich der Disziplin Beachtung schenken, multi-lokale Forschungszusammenarbeit auf verschiedenen Maßstabsebenen fördern, Bündnisse pflegen innerhalb eines breiten Spektrums politisch aktiver Gruppierungen, welches auch Anti-Kriegs-, Anti-Imperialismus-, Anti-Rassismus-, Gewerkschafts-, Umwelt- sowie Lesben- und Schwulen Bewegungen einschließt. Ebenso notwendig ist ein kreativer Entwurf politischer Projekte aus verschiedenen theoretischen Perspektiven. Kurz gesagt plädiere ich dafür, dass feministische Theorien und Aktionen durchaus heterogen sein können, dass wir jedoch gleichzeitig danach streben sollen, ein gemeinsames feministisches Projekt konstant weiter zu entwickeln.

INDEX

Keywords: collaboration, feminist alliances, power

Schlüsselwörter: Zusammenarbeit, feministische Bündnisse, Macht

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