

**SPECIAL FEATURE:
CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST THOUGHT IN AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND
Recollecting and reflecting on feminist geography in Aotearoa/
New Zealand and beyond**

ROBYN LONGHURST and LYNDA JOHNSTON

Abstract

Over the past three decades feminist geography and the concept of gender have been deployed unevenly by geographers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A politics of knowledge production means that feminist geography occupies both the centre and the margins of academic knowledge. In order to highlight the diversity of feminist geographical knowledges we pay attention to local, regional, national and international contexts. First, we begin by positioning ourselves as working in the geography programme at the University of Waikato. Second, we review the directions taken at other universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Third, we examine a number of key international organisations that have been important in supporting geographers and others who share a focus on space and gender. In the fourth and final section we suggest strategies for strengthening feminist geography in the future.

Keywords

feminist geography, gender, space, politics, knowledge, Aotearoa/New Zealand

Positioning feminist geography

In 2010 we were both awarded honours by the New Zealand Geographical Society. Robyn received the Distinguished New Zealand Geographer Gold Medal, while Lynda received the Distinguished Service Award. We mention these awards because for us, as feminists, they brought into focus the complexity of our relationship with the discipline of geography. Over the years we have employed feminist and queer theories in order to research the ways in which bodies and spaces are 'sexed' and 'gendered' (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). Taking a lead from Judith Butler (1990) and other feminist theorists, we have been troubling gender and geography for years. This makes us feel both excluded and included, marginalised and at the centre, discriminated against and affirmed by our geography colleagues. When we were notified about the awards we were surprised (to say the least!). We have grown accustomed to being 'those women at Waikato', or 'feminist killjoys' as Sara Ahmed (2010) might appraise us. It often seemed to us that our work was not widely well regarded and as though our feminist, gender, and sexuality-based critiques were unwelcome. The awards prompted us to rethink this. Had we got it wrong? Had we been imagining this? Maybe we had become so institutionalised after 20 years in a university environment that our critiques of hegemonic knowledges in geography had now lost some of their former impact. Or, had we successfully 'queered' the discipline of geography, or at least changed the degree that women were now much closer to being 'equal' partners in the production of knowledge?

We were also prompted to reflect on how feminist geography was perceived beyond the bounds of the academy. When the University of Waikato sent out a press release about the awards approximately 20 online responses were received. While a couple of these were positive most were highly critical, for example:

'What the f is a feminist geographer? I think I will instigate an award for the best feminist forecourt attendant in a Shell service station'.

‘Dykes on hikes – what the – this is sexist garbage and hardly news’.

‘I thought Helen Clark had left the country?’

‘And NZ takes another step backwards into the abyss of oblivion. No wonder there is a mass exodus to Aussie’.

‘Ah ha ha that is the most ridiculous thing I’ve read in a long time. Not only are they feminist geographers but significant feminist geographers. How hilarious’.

‘How can intellectuals be so stupid. I note the recognition was given by another woman so perhaps it’s just another case of feminist self interest’.

A more positive response came from ‘lotus-bud’ who commented: ‘Feminist NZ geographers, it just means there were no males involved to botch things up’. Unfortunately over the years we have not been strangers to this kind of media attention. The subject of geography – in popular pub quizzes and board games – is knowing the names of capitals, national flags, and physical landscape features.

Feminist geography has long been misunderstood by members of the public, and by some academics too. It refers to a body of literature and series of questions which has been generated since the late 1970s after the concept of gender was introduced, mainly by women, into the discipline of human geography (see, for example: Zelinsky’s (1973) ‘The strange case of the missing female geographer’; McDowell’s (1979) ‘Women in British geography’; Momsen’s (1980) ‘Women in Canadian geography’; Women and Geography Study Group of the Institute of British Geographers (IBG, 1984) *Geography and gender*; García Ramón *et al.*’s (1988) ‘Women and geography in Spanish universities’). Since then feminist geography has been at the forefront of rethinking key geographical concepts such as work (McDowell, 1997); class (Gibson-Graham, 1994, 2006); migration (Pratt, 2004); mobility (Hanson, 2010); development (Momsen & Kincaid, 1993); methodologies (Kinson & Cupples, 2014) and ‘space, place and knowledge’ (Moss & Al Hindi, 2007). Feminist geographers have also developed new subject areas, for example: home (Blunt & Dowling, 2006); bodies (Johnston, 2005; Longhurst, 2001); sexuality and space (Bell & Valentine, 1995); spaces of queer activism (Johnston & Waitt, 2015); and transgender geographies (Browne *et al.*, 2010; Doan, 2010).

As Maria Dolores García Ramón and Janice Monk (2007, p. 247) note: ‘It is now widely acknowledged that knowledge is “situated”, reflecting its cultural, political and intellectual contexts as well as the personal values of those engaged in its creation. This recognition presents an especially interesting perspective for geographers.’ Like all knowledge, ideas about gender and space are fluid and overlapping (McDowell & Sharp, 1999; McDowell, 1999). While this scholarship varies across place and time, at the core of feminist geography is the concern for the importance of gender, (in)equality, spatial politics and difference. Wendy Larner (1995, p. 177) argues that as: ‘recognition of differences within and between women has become more integral to the analyses of feminist geographers, there have been moves to contextualise and localise feminist theorising within the discipline’.

One example of context and location is that the term ‘feminist geography’ is not used universally. While it is reasonably widely deployed in the USA and UK, in other contexts where feminism struggles for legitimacy within human geography (and we do not wish to down-play the struggles within the USA and UK) other terms and phrases such as ‘gender geography’, ‘geography with a gender perspective’ and ‘women and space’ may be preferred (see for example, Raju, 2004 on geographies of gender in India). These terms often describe teaching and research that focus on inequities; that is, on the spatial and social constraints experienced by women connected to gender roles and relations.

Furthering this line of argument, García Ramón and Monk (2007) make the point that feminist or gender geographies produced outside of the 'Anglo-American centre' are often marginalised and constructed as somehow 'lesser'. For example, they are seen as less theoretically sophisticated, they do not rely on key Anglo-American texts and/or European theories, and they focus on places that are seen to be of limited interest to many. There are 'increasing concerns among geographers outside the Anglophone realm, or more specifically, the Anglo-American realm, that scholarship is marginalising other geographic traditions and that our discipline is impoverished by a growing hegemony' (García Ramón & Monk, 1997, p. 247). Clearly 'place matters' to the production of knowledge (Monk, 1994). What the chroniclers often describe as 'international' trends are in fact trends associated with the UK and USA.

Feminist geography 'down under' in Aotearoa/New Zealand has been produced in some ways that are similar to, but in other ways different from, those produced in the 'Anglo-American realm'. We share some things in common but our experience of (re)producing feminist geography has also been different in a number of ways. One of the things that Aotearoa/New Zealand shares with countries such as the UK, USA, Canada and Australia is that gender has been part (although to varying degrees) of the human geography curricula in universities for approximately 30 years. In the 1980s questions began to arise about the discipline focusing too narrowly on 'Man (literally) and his environment' and about its various traditions and practices alienating women (*Antipode*, 1984; Stokes *et al.*, 1987; Dooley, 1987; Bowlby *et al.*, 1989; Boyce, 1989; Johnson, 1987, 1990). Since then more women have taken up positions as geographers and concurrently women's experiences of space and place have been more or less included in geography curricula and research (although again to varying degrees in different departments, as we outline later in this article).

In 1997 Peace, Longhurst and Johnston (1997, p. 115) argued: 'feminist geographers working in Aotearoa/New Zealand no longer solely occupy the margins but ambiguously occupy subject positions both on the margins and at the centre of geographical discourse', a point also made in our opening story about the awards. The global positioning of Aotearoa/New Zealand as 'down under' (Peace *et al.*, 1997, p. 115) means that feminist geographical knowledge, and other geographical knowledge more generally, is often devalued. For example, publishers have told us that in order for our work to attain a broader audience and be 'more relevant' (to whom exactly?) we need to include material not just from and on Aotearoa/New Zealand but also from and on other places such as the UK and USA.

In other ways, though, we are part of the hegemony. For example, in Aotearoa/New Zealand the dominant language spoken is English. It is noted that 'in many countries, in order to be promoted in an increasingly competitive environment, it is necessary to publish in ... "international" journals; in that way, pressures to publish in English rather than the native language reinforce the Anglophone hegemony' (García Ramón & Monk, 2007, p. 253).

The concept of gender has been deployed unevenly by geographers in different places. Power permeates the production of knowledge, including feminist geographical knowledge, and so producing a chronological narrative that represents categorically progressive understandings of gender throughout the history of the discipline of geography is not necessarily useful (quite the contrary). In this account, therefore, we aim to pay attention to local, regional, national and international contexts. We do not claim that our story is necessarily typical of others' stories and so in the first section we position ourselves as working in the geography programme at the University of Waikato. Second, we move from discussing feminist geography at Waikato to examining the directions taken at other universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Third, we examine a number of key international organisations that have been important in supporting

geographers and others who share a focus on space and gender. In the fourth and final section we suggest strategies for strengthening feminist geography in the future.

'Waikato wimmin – capturing the campus'

Over the past 20 years we (independently, together and with others) have written about the rise and demise, strengths and weaknesses, similarities and differences among feminist geography at Waikato, at other geography departments in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and internationally (Longhurst & Peace, 1993; Longhurst, 1994; Longhurst & Peace, 1995; Longhurst & Johnston, 2005; Longhurst, 2006; Johnston & Longhurst, 2008; Longhurst, 2011). We do not want to repeat this work here but we do want to take up the opportunity to share some of these insights with a wider audience beyond geographers and to reflect on possible futures for feminist geography in Aotearoa/New Zealand and internationally.

The University of Waikato is one of six universities offering geography in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The others are the University of Auckland, Massey University, Victoria University of Wellington, University of Canterbury and University of Otago. To put Waikato's reputation in a broader context, the University was established in 1964, making it one of our 'new' universities. It has, therefore, perhaps been less fettered by Euro-academic tradition than some others. In 1990 *North & South* journalist Deborah Coddington warned readers that feminism had infiltrated teaching and research in a number of disciplines at Waikato, including education, psychology, history and geography. 'Wimmin' she proclaimed, were 'capturing the campus' (Coddington, 1990, p. 78). This discourse about Waikato University was not entirely new. It had, from the late 1970s, something of a reputation as being a site of feminist and Māori radicalism. This discourse continued into the 1990s.

While 'capturing the campus' was highly unlikely, it was the case that the geography department at Waikato was at this time different from other geography departments around the country. For example, Waikato was the only geography department that had equal numbers of men and women on staff (Johnson, 1987; Boyce, 1989). This was partly because feminist academics had a strong voice at Waikato and partly because geography at Waikato was a department of *human* geography rather than physical geography, which was taught in earth sciences. Human geography was taught in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (where it is still located today), where discourses about rationality and objectivity were less dominant (Hammond, 1992).

Waikato geographers seemed more willing to accept work that was subjective and overtly political. In this regard, Evelyn Stokes' appointment as a foundation staff member of the University was vitally important because Stokes never shied away from being 'political'. In 1987 in a special issue of *New Zealand Geographer* Stokes not only published a groundbreaking article on 'Maori geography or geography of Maoris', in which she challenged Eurocentric thinking, but also offered a collective statement on feminist geography (see Stokes, 1987a, 1987b; Stokes *et al.*, 1987). It is also worth noting that Waikato University in 1976 had the first centre for Women's Studies in the country. Ann Magee, who came to Waikato's geography department in 1978 (from Victoria where there was a strong group of Marxist scholars and activists), was vitally important in establishing this centre and in establishing feminist geography. After Magee's departure at the end of 1986 there were also a number of other significant appointments in feminist geography, including Louise Johnson, Wendy Larner, and Robin Peace.

Unsurprisingly, this particular way in which feminist geography took shape at Waikato shared aspects in common with what happened in other departments across the country or in universities overseas. The grand narrative offered in the authoritative *The dictionary of human geography*

(Johnston *et al.*, 2000 drawing on the work of Bowlby *et al.* 1989) about feminist geography is that it has had three distinguishable strands: the geography of women (1970s); socialist feminist geography (1980s); and feminist geographies of difference (1990s). We explain that at Waikato (Longhurst & Johnston, 2005, p. 99):

the geography of women approach was never particularly strong. Feminist geography had its roots not in 'welfare geography' or 'liberal feminism' but in a range of radical movements, including Marxism, anarchism, radical feminism and Maori sovereignty (see Awatere, 1984) ... Neither does the second strand of Johnston *et al.*'s (2000: 260) model of feminist geography – 'Socialist Feminist Geography' – describe neatly the unfolding of feminist geography at Waikato. Articulations of gender and class were on the agenda in the Department ... but did not assume as much importance as they did in some other contexts.

In the 1970s and early 1980s (prior to the implementation of the economic policies of Roger Douglas, Minister of Finance of the 4th Labour Government) Aotearoa/New Zealand was widely considered to be more egalitarian than countries such as the UK. Categories of analysis such as class, economics, production, and employment were paid some attention by Waikato feminist geographers in the 1980s but just as much, if not more, attention was paid to issues of race, sovereignty, colonisation, and the Treaty of Waitangi (see Awatere, 1984; Larner, 1995). These were pressing issues for many living in Aotearoa/New Zealand at this time.

The third strand of Johnston *et al.*'s (2000, p. 260) model of feminist geography – 'Feminist Geographies of Difference' – tends to reflect more closely the experience of Waikato feminist geographers and probably feminist geographers more generally in Aotearoa/New Zealand, who over the past decade have begun to draw on a wide range of social and cultural theories in order to develop a more in-depth and intersectional understanding of the ways in which bodies and subjectivities shape, and are shaped by, space. Some of this research is concerned with: Mana wahine geographies (August, 2005; Simmonds, 2011, 2014); migrant women, food and home (Longhurst *et al.*, 2009); critical geographies of love (Morrison *et al.*, 2013); heterosexuality and home (Morrison, 2013); maternities (Longhurst, 2008); virtual gaming and gender (Todd, 2012); gender variant geographies (Johnston, 2012; Johnston & Longhurst, 2013); and visceral methodologies where we use our bodies as instruments of research (Longhurst *et al.*, 2008).

Across Aotearoa/New Zealand

To this point we have focused mainly on our experiences of teaching and researching feminist geography at Waikato University. In this next section we broaden the scope to consider the other universities in which feminist geography is taught and researched. In 2006 one of us (Robyn) presented a paper at the International Geographical Union (IGU) Regional Congress in Brisbane on producing feminist geography in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Information for this presentation was solicited from conversations and email exchanges with key individuals in geography departments at Otago, Canterbury, Victoria, Massey and Auckland. Colleagues were asked a series of questions including 'is feminist or gender geography being taught at your institution? Are you or any of your colleagues researching in this area? Is there much interest from students, including graduates, in this area? And, how many men and women do you currently have on academic staff (continuing, paid, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, and professor level positions) in your geography department?' We draw on this information presented at the IGU conference in Brisbane as well as on more recent insights gleaned from reviewing university geography department and programme websites and from being involved in a recently formed national group, Women and Gender Geographies Research Network (WGGRN, see <http://esocsci.org.nz/networks/women-gender-geographies/>).

In 2006 women were still under-represented in all but one of the university geography departments in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Perhaps most notable was Auckland, arguably New

Zealand's largest geography and environmental science schools, with an academic staff of more than 20 but only one woman (a scientist, not a feminist geographer). At Victoria University geography had 16 academic staff, but once again, just one woman. Women did, however, feature more strongly at Otago where the geography department in 2006 had a continuing academic staff of 12, including four women. Canterbury had 13 academic staff, including three women. Massey, a smaller department, had seven academic staff, which included two women. Waikato had the highest ratio of women – an academic staff of 11, including five women.

In 2015 an examination of staff lists on six university geography websites reveals that little has changed in the intervening eight years. In some cases, namely University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington, amalgamations into larger schools of environment and earth sciences have taken place, making comparisons both with the 2006 data and data across all the universities more complex. Nevertheless, a general picture emerges. Auckland remains the largest geography programme with more than 45 academic staff listed on their website. Overall, 26 percent of these appointments are filled by women. Noticeably men still dominate in the Professor and Associate Professor ranges with only two out of a total of 19 positions at this level filled by women. Geography (in the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences) at Victoria University of Wellington has seen rapid growth in staff numbers over the past few years, employing a total of 37 permanent academic staff, 29 percent of which are women. This is an improvement since 2006. At Canterbury, 30 percent of permanent academic staff in geography are women. Otago is similar at 29 percent. Massey and Waikato both have much smaller geography programmes than Auckland and Victoria University, both employing 50 percent women at a range of levels from lecturer through to professor.

Interestingly, in 1989 a geography graduate student (Wendy Boyce) did a similar 'counting' exercise mapping the number of women at lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor and professor level in Aotearoa/New Zealand geography departments. Out of a total of 62 staff, only five were women. Twenty-six years later, there has thankfully been some improvement, but still the percentage of women on staff in geography programmes and departments across Aotearoa/New Zealand remains at approximately 30 percent.

Clearly counting women staff is not the same as a gendered or feminist perspective informing the discipline, but it is one factor that illustrates that geography programmes and departments in Aotearoa/New Zealand are similar to some others around the world. Gillian Rose (1993), who works in the UK, notes in her book *Feminism and geography*: "The academic discipline of geography has historically been dominated by men, perhaps more so than any other science" (p. 1). Men have been over-represented in professional geography organisations, in geography departments and in academic publishing, and it appears that this is still the case in 2015 in Aotearoa/New Zealand geography.

To restate, however, it is not just the numbers of men and women per se that matter. More importantly, and perhaps what the numbers indicate is that men's interests still tend to structure what counts as legitimate geographical knowledge. Rose (1993) makes the point that women's exclusion in geography is not just about the themes of research, nor even about the concepts feminists employ to organise those themes, but that there is something in the very claim to knowing in geography which tends to exclude women as producers of geographical knowledge.

In short, it is not possible to simply equate the number of women in geography departments with the teaching and researching of feminist perspectives, but nevertheless it is a useful starting point and in the case of Aotearoa/New Zealand the numbers of women in departments appears to bear at least some correlation to the teaching of feminist and gender geography. To the best of our knowledge the University of Auckland does not offer any courses in feminist geography, nor is gender one of the perspectives commonly taught. Yet some staff

here are researching ‘children, sensing and place’ (Bartos, 2013), and ‘subjectivity, “race” and transcultural geographical research’ (Fisher, 2014) using feminist geographical frameworks. Feminist geographers have moved into development studies at the University of Auckland (see Underhill-Sem, 2012).

Further south, Julie Cupples at Canterbury, until a few years ago when she left for a position overseas, taught a dedicated feminist geography course at 300 level, which was double-coded with gender studies. Cupples’ teaching is informed by her feminist geography scholarship on, for example, media (Glynn & Cupples, 2015; Cupples & Thompson, 2010), and Latin American development (Cupples, 2013). As far as we know Cupples’ 300 level feminist geography is no longer taught. In the geography department at Otago University Ruth Panelli – drawing on her research on gender and rural spaces (Little & Panelli, 2007) – used to teach feminist approaches in several undergraduate and a postgraduate course, but she too has left her position. At Victoria University of Wellington, Sara Kindon teaches a 300 level course on gender and development. Her research and teaching is informed by feminist geographical methodologies, such as participatory action research (Kindon & Cupples, 2014). Juliana Mansvelt, Aisling Gallagher (Geography) and Regina Scheyvens (Development Studies) at Massey also incorporate feminist perspectives into some of their teaching. These women are also supervising a number of masters and PhD students who draw on feminist perspectives.

Clearly the efforts of even just one feminist geographer in a department can make a huge difference, but without supportive colleagues or someone working in the same institution in a similar area, it is often not an easy road establishing programmes in feminist geography. In the mid-1990s we saw evidence that feminist geography was gaining some traction in Aotearoa/New Zealand universities and a few key individuals were beginning to teach and research in this area. In the 2000s, however, universities began to increasingly embrace neoliberal agendas and vocationally-driven courses began to prosper often at the expense of other subjects such as music, languages, and gender studies (Berg & Roche, 1997). Women’s and gender studies programmes and departments across the country found themselves having to explain more vehemently than ever their value to those seemingly interested only in the financial viability of universities.

Also, over the past two decades some feminists (especially those who on a number of axes benefit from being part of the hegemony) have also needed to be mindful of criticisms from Māori, lesbians, people with disabilities and people occupying lower socio-economic positions that gender should not always be the overriding analytical category in teaching and research (Kobayashi & Peake, 1994; Larner, 1995; Women and Geography Study Group, 1997). Convincing arguments were made that ‘race’/ethnicity, sexuality, disability, class and so on are also important factors to consider, including how they intersect with gender. Engaging successfully in politics requires figuring out which differences matter when and where, and creating alliances among differently situated individuals and groups to work towards meaningful change.

An example of a recent (2013) creation of alliances among differently situated individuals is the Women and Gender Geographies Research Network (WGGRN). This group of students, teachers and researchers, brought together by Annie Bartos and Karen Fisher from the School of Environment, University of Auckland, aim to:

strengthen and support the visibility of women geographers and researchers; strengthen and support the visibility of gender and geography perspectives through our teaching and research; facilitate opportunities to support our research, teaching and academic career development; [and] support and advocate for women geographers (Women and Gender Geographies, 2015).

The WGGRN meet regularly using videoconference technology. The emphasis of this group is not so much on feminist geography, per se, but on supporting a group of quite disparate women (and men interested in gender issues) who learn, teach and research in geography and related disciplines. The website states: ‘meetings are open to anyone interested in discussing gendered issues related to our research, teaching and/or personal lives’ (Women and Gender Geographies, 2015). Our experience to date is that meetings conducted online (different geography programmes and departments take turns at hosting, chairing and taking notes at the meetings) are attended on average by approximately 8-10 women members.

Beyond national boundaries: Building alliances

In September 2013, as many of us in Aotearoa/New Zealand celebrated 120 years of women’s suffrage, we were reminded that it is important to keep fighting for the rights of women. Feminist geography continues to be a useful vehicle for this. After more than 30 years it has not necessarily succeeded in destabilising masculinism in the discipline of human geography, but it has heightened awareness of the value of considering gender as an important component of people’s lived experiences. Although it has been difficult getting ‘establishments’ in some settings, for example the New Zealand Geographical Society, to recognise the value of a feminist perspective, various actions, such as us receiving awards, indicate that some change at least has taken place. A feminist or gender perspective has influenced directions in the discipline, such as increased attention being paid to a politics of difference, sexuality, power relations, and emotion and affect within human experience. As Garica Ramón and Monk (1997, p.255) indicate:

Gender research has been incorporated, for example, into some national state of the art publications (see, for example, Bosque-Maurel et al., 1992), in international encyclopaedias in the social sciences (Smelser & Baltes, 2001) and in the recent compendia of research in various subdisciplines (Agnew et al., 2003; Sheppard & Barnes, 2000; Duncan et al., 2004; Nogué & Romero, 2006) in which additionally an entire volume has been devoted to feminist geography (Nelson & Seager, 2005).

It is also worthy of note that in 2014 the Commission on Gender and Geography within the International Geographical Union (IGU) was awarded the inaugural Commission Excellence Award out of 41 commissions. This commission struggled in the early 1980s to establish a voice within the IGU. During this time, a ‘letter, signed by approximately 30 people, was written to the Secretary General of the IGU requesting formal recognition for a gender group. Informal connections were important in furthering the discussions and lobbying for support’ (Monk 2008, p. 3). Finally, in 1988 a Study Group on Gender and Geography was approved by the IGU Executive Committee. This Study Group, which later became a commission, has been vitally important in fostering communication and the sharing of perspectives through meetings and a newsletter across national boundaries.

Another significant move forward for feminist geography internationally was the establishment of a journal dedicated specifically to the disciplinary area. In 1994 Mona Domosh and Liz Bondi edited and published the first volume of *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* (see Domosh & Bondi, 2014 on ‘21 years on – remembering the making of *Gender, Place and Culture*’). Pamela Moss (2014, p. 810) explains that she remembers the Geographic Perspectives on Women business meeting when Mona Domosh announced that she and Liz Bondi were going to be editors of a new journal for feminist geography: ‘We were sitting in a circle. I remember thinking what a wonderful thing to happen. Geography is changing’. We agree, and have therefore both served terms as editors of this journal. Participating in broader networks of feminist geography that generate more possibilities for

feminist geographers, especially those working in environments where work on gender tends to be under-valued, or even worse maligned, continues to be important.

It is hoped that in the future local, national and international initiatives such as the IGU Commission on Gender and Geography and the journal *Gender, Place and Culture* will continue to foster plurality (theoretical, conceptual, and empirical) in feminist geography. Many Anglo-American feminist geographies have, in the past decade, begun to take into account ‘diversity and difference’, often in the form of class, ‘race’/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Other categories may be more important in other contexts, such as whānau in Aotearoa (Simmonds, 2014), the wearing of headscarfs in Turkey (Gökarıksel, 2012), caste in India (Raju, 2004), or religion in Palestine and Israel (Fenster & Hamdan-Saliba, 2013). In order to attend to diverse cultural lives feminist geographers are paying attention to a range of environmental issues, including ‘water and feminism’ (Ahlers & Zwartveen, 2009), ‘queering disasters’ (Dominey-Howes *et al.*, 2014), ‘gendered frontiers of land control and indigenous territory in Ecuador’ (Radcliffe, 2014), to mention just a few examples.

Recent trends in human geography focus on areas such as embodiment, sex and sexuality, emotion and affect, psychoanalysis, non-representational theory, intersectionality, and mobility. We welcome these new trends. In fact, arguably a number have been heavily influenced by feminist theory. Despite this there is still a distinct possibility that feminist geography could become increasingly overshadowed by work in these areas. It is vital, therefore, that teaching and research in all disciplinary areas continues to consider gender as an important category of analysis.

Moving forward

At the beginning of this article we admitted being surprised to receive awards from the New Zealand Geographical Society. It prompted us to think through our experiences of hegemonic knowledge production in geography. We end the article with more questions. Have we, and other feminist geographers, managed to end the production of masculinist, heteronormative, colonialist geography? In other words, has the discipline of geography diversified so that women geographers, gender analyses, and feminist frameworks are now commonplace? Are we happy feminist geographers, or feminist killjoys (Ahmed, 2010)? Well, both.

To address this paradox we comment on the overarching status and contributions of feminist geography across Aotearoa/New Zealand and suggest some ways in which the work might be advanced, both intellectually and politically. As we have indicated, gendered or feminist perspectives in geography have developed unevenly and at different times over the past three decades, sometimes dependent on a university’s particular traditions, other times on key individuals being employed in a department. Having only a few women in some departments has not necessarily resulted in a dearth of feminist geography, because key individuals have been able to make strategic interventions in the field of gender in their departments. Context has been important in shaping the timing, extent, and nature of teaching and research. Over the years the field of feminist geography has significantly changed human geography, by careful critique and the reworking of existing categories. Studies of sexuality and space, for example, provide significant insights into the lived places and spaces of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals (Johnston & Waitt, 2015). More recently, heterosexuality is a feminist geography focus (Morrison, 2013). So, too, is the extension of gender geographies to now consider gender variant and trans geographies across a number of spatial scales (bodies, homes, neighbourhoods, cities, rural and so on) (Johnston & Longhurst, 2013). The ambiguity of our place in the world (marginal yet celebrated; distant yet central to international debates) has created distinct feminist geographical knowledges.

As strategies for moving ahead we suggest that initiatives such as the recently formed WGGRN are important for bringing together gender researchers in geography and cognate disciplines across the country. The fact that this network exists highlights evidence of masculinist hegemonies that still run through geographical knowledge production in Aotearoa/New Zealand. These scholars need support that they may not get in their own geography programmes. They also need to reach out to others examining gender in a range of other fields such as sociology, media studies, history, and Māori and Pacific studies. It is also important that feminist geographers network (both electronically and in person) across national boundaries in multiple directions (Monk *et al.*, 2002). This will enable greater international collaboration in research, teaching, and the sharing of information and resources. Some of the WGGRN members are also members of the IGU Commission on Gender and Geography. The commission goes far beyond Anglo-American geographies. It is 'racially'/ethnically, and geographically dispersed across the globe.

Increasing international collaboration might also enable those working in isolated or marginalised contexts to receive more intellectual and political support than what is currently available. Fostering our own intellectual and political communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand but also reaching out to gender scholars and activists in a wide variety of places and disciplinary areas will enable *all of us* interested in advancing social justice, contesting hegemonies, and valuing difference to move in productive new directions.

ROBYN LONGHURST is Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Professor of Geography at the University of Waikato. She has served as Editor-in-Chief of Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography and Chair of the International Geographical Union Commission on Gender and Geography. Robyn has published on issues relating to pregnancy, mothering, sexuality, 'visceral geographies', masculinities, and body size and shape.

LYNDA JOHNSTON is Professor of Geography at the University of Waikato. Her research expertise centres on embodied geographies of gender and sexualities and she has published on topics such as: wedding tourism; gay pride parades; bodybuilding; gay ski week; migrant women and food; and feminist and queer methodologies. Lynda is Editor of Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography and steering group member of the International Geographical Union Commission on Gender and Geography.

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