

**Working Paper No. 33**

**The Status of Women Geographers and of the  
Teaching of Feminist Geography in Academic  
Institutions in the United Kingdom.**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper presents an overview of the status of the teaching of feminist geography as well as the status of female geographers, both students and faculty, in United Kingdom geography departments in the 1980s. Drawing upon international comparisons, especially with Canada and the USA, similarities and differences in their stations are highlighted.



## **Introduction**

The intention of this paper is to map out changes over the last fifteen years in the status of women in academic geography in the United Kingdom, and where appropriate, to draw comparisons with the international situation of female geographers, especially those in North America. Such a comparative approach allows not only for the situation of women to be compared with their male colleagues but also to assess how their situation in relation to that of female geographers in other countries with similar systems of higher education.

These changes in academic geography departments are discussed in the context of feminist issues and approaches concerning the teaching of the discipline. One of the major ramifications of the presence of women in an academic discipline is the incorporation of feminist analyses of its subject matter into its theoretical frameworks and empirical research. Closely associated with these developments is their incorporation into teaching material: the inroads made in the teaching of feminist geography over the last fifteen years is outlined. Because of feminist geography's early development in Canada, the United States and England this discussion draws largely on Anglo-American experiences.

The first survey on the status of women in British geography was conducted in 1978 (McDowell, 1979). This paper builds on that study by presenting the results of a second survey which attempted to assess the position of women in geography departments and the unequal sex balance

between faculty and students as well as the status of the teaching of gender issues in geography (see McDowell and Peake, 1989). As such it adds to the small but burgeoning body of literature that documents the changing position and status of women in academic geography, as well as the teaching of feminist geography (1).

The paper commences with a brief discussion on feminist geography. An overview follows of changes in the composition and status of female students and lecturers in United Kingdom geography departments since 1978. The next section gives a brief overview of the status of the teaching of feminist geography. These findings are then compared with the situation with other countries, primarily with the U.S. and Canada.

### **Feminist Geography**

Although arguably still in its infancy compared to the teaching of feminist concerns in other social science disciplines, such as sociology and anthropology, feminist geography cover a range of human geography sub disciplines. Its origins in Britain can be pinpointed to 1976 with the publication by Jackie Tivers of the first article on feminist geography in Area. Throughout the late 1970s feminist work in geography focused on the spatial behaviour patterns of women as well as women's perceptions of their environments. It was not until the early 1980s that attention turned to how and why women were in a subordinate position i.e., research went beyond descriptive accounts of gender roles to a study of gender relations. This required addressing

completely new areas of concern in the geographic research and teaching such as processes of reproduction in the private sphere of the home. Throughout this period socialist feminist analyses predominated and determined the agenda for research (although this was more true for research on advanced industrialised countries and less so for research on Third World countries).

The 1990s have so far been characterised by a concern with social diversity and difference. Socialist feminist approaches are now only one among many and research topics encompass (among others) subjectivity as well as economic bases of women's subordination, ecofeminism, gender differences in environmental impact, ideologies of domesticity and their relevance for the planning and development of urban form, "cartographies" of gender ("mappings" of identity and power), especially in relation to the postcolonial subject, the spatial and social construction of gendered identities, "mapping" the body, particularly the deconstruction of the sex/gender dichotomy, and relations between patriarchy, sexuality and spatiality. Underlying all these topics is a study of the ways in which environments reinforce or (re)create existing or new social relations. The concern of this paper is with the patriarchal environment of academic geography and its effects on women and feminism in the discipline.

### **The Survey**

The survey on the status of women in British geography departments in universities conducted in 1978 (see McDowell, 1979) investigated the numbers of female students, the numbers and

status of female faculty and the numbers of articles published by women in the two main journals of geography in Britain, Area and Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers. Replies from 34 departments constituted a response rate of 83 per cent. The results showed that 42 per cent of undergraduates were women, but at postgraduate level there was a marked decline in their numbers to 29 per cent of masters students and 31 per cent of full-time doctoral students. Among lecturers male dominance was overwhelming: only 7 per cent of full-time teaching staff were women and 43 per cent of departments had no women at all on their full-time staff. In terms of status, the proportion of females who were professors and readers was lower than that of their male colleagues: the proportion of male professors was nearly twice as high as that of female professors, with absolute numbers of 69 and three respectively.

Ten years later we decided to see how much this situation had changed. In the latter part of the academic year 1987/88 a questionnaire was sent to the heads of departments of the 103 institutions we identified as offering geography at undergraduate level. Follow up letters were sent out where necessary and we received 84 responses. Of these 11 were excluded: eight offered geography only as part of a combined degree, and three no longer offered it. This gave us a target population of 92, resulting in a 78 per cent response rate. The distribution of these 72 responses was as follows: 58 universities (of which 16 were new universities or former polytechnics) and 14 colleges and institutions of higher education (2). The following sections discuss the data in relation to students and faculty.



## Students

Table I United Kingdom geography undergraduate honours degree results, 1987.

Class	Universities		New Universities		Colleges of Higher Education	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	1	4.1	4.0	2.1	1.8	0.5
2.1	41.0	41.6	38.7	29.7	25.1	27.9
2.2	43.3	46.9	55.0	57.6	56.4	47.2
3	3.6	5.3	1.7	4.9	6.2	8.6
Pass	3.2	2.1	2.1	5.7	10.8	13.7
Fail	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.3	1.0	2.0
Totals	962	1038	238	384	195	233

Source Survey of United Kingdom Geography Departments, 1988.

Table I gives the class results for United Kingdom female and male undergraduates in summer 1987. These show that women achieved the same results as men - 45.1 per cent of female university students were awarded the highest categories of degrees - first class honours and second class, upper division - compared with 45.6 per cent of men (3). While a slightly smaller

proportion of the new university students achieved 2.1s or firsts, the number of women in this category was substantially greater - 40.8 per cent - than that of their male counterparts - 31.5 per cent. Only in the colleges and institutions of higher education did women more closely conform to the conventional female stereotypes of doing good solid work, neither shining nor failing, and being slightly more concentrated in the second class, lower division (but still with honours), than male students (4). As the figures in Table I reveal women do as well if not better than their male colleagues, with fewer low honours grades i.e., thirds, passes i.e., Ordinary degrees and failures. In the majority of university departments (Table IIa) the proportion of female undergraduates studying geography (at 42 per cent for 1978 and at 44 per cent for 1988) was close to the national university average of 40 per cent. However, in absolute terms, with the reduction in the total number of student places in this period, the number of female undergraduates had fallen. In the new universities women, on average, in 1988, accounted for 38 per cent of undergraduates, although there was more variation between individual departments than in the older universities (Table IIb). But at the 14 colleges and institutions of higher education women were better represented, comprising 49 per cent of all undergraduates, than at either the universities or former polytechnics. This relatively high figure could be due to the fact that the colleges and institutions of higher education attract more mature and re-entry students and women feature prominently among these.

Both Tables IIa and IIb reveal the dramatic drop in the number of female geography students between undergraduate and postgraduate levels, the vast majority of the latter, 88 per cent, being

Table IIa Representation of female geography students in United Kingdom universities in 1978 and 1988\*

Level of study	1988		1988		1978	
	Numbers of		%		%	
	Men	Women	Women		Women	
First Degree	3709	2872	43.6		41.9	
Masters Degree	177	97	35.4		28.6	
Ph.D. full time	290	135	31.8		31.0	
Ph.D. part time	59	31	34.4		20.0	

\*The figures for 1988 refer only to the former universities.

Sources

1. Survey of United Kingdom Geography Departments, 1988.
2. McDowell, 1979.

in the former university sector, where courses and grants for postgraduates are more readily available. Over the decade (1978-1988) both the number of women and men registered for research degrees declined. At the time of the 1978 survey 218 women and 596 men were undertaking doctoral level studies compared with 166 women and 349 men in 1988. The extent

of the attrition in the former university sector (Table IIa) remained constant, except for the sharp increase in the proportion of female part-time doctoral students.

Table IIb Representation of female geography students among United Kingdom universities, the new universities and institutions of higher education in 1988.

	Numbers of		%	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
First Degree	5436	4198		43.6
Masters Degree	234	124		34.4
Ph.D. full time	305	134		30.5
Ph.D. part time	71	34		32.4

Source Survey of United Kingdom Geography Departments, 1988

Despite this increase in proportions of women the numbers of both male and female doctoral level students who studied part-time decreased significantly (from 314 in 1978 to 90 in 1988). It appears that male students were less prepared to study part-time for Ph.D.s given the onerous burden this method of study puts on the student's daily life. The numbers of male students doing Ph.D.s in 1988 were only a fifth of those in 1978, while the numbers for women had only fallen

by a half. These figures may suggest that part-time study was an option that women could not afford to give up because of their responsibilities elsewhere. Thus, although the decline in the number of male students was greater than that of females, both female and male students had their opportunities for further study reduced, and in 1988 there were still twice the number of male as opposed to female postgraduate geographers. The situation in the new universities was worse: only 26 of 103 graduate students, approximately a quarter, were women. The small numbers (n=16) studying for higher degrees at the colleges and institutions of higher education prevent any meaningful interpretation of results.

These changes are partially a reflection of the onslaught of cuts in finance for higher education during this period which resulted in fewer postgraduate awards for human geography and the cutting of funding to institutions with low completion rates, making part-time students a less attractive proposition. Indeed, the decade (1978-1988) was dominated by a radical right-wing government whose sustained attack on higher education manifested itself in a reduction of funds for research and departmental budgets, the amalgamation of departments, a reduced number of student places, and a growing divide between a few so-called 'elite' institutions dedicated to research and 'the rest' which are gradually being transformed to teaching institutions whose mission (as the government sees it) is to instill in their students the virtues of market ethics. Since 1988 to 1993, however, the situation has changed somewhat; higher education has expanded with undergraduate numbers in all disciplines rising from 261,900 to 436,000 (Darnton, 1994). This was a result of the decision to increase the number of undergraduates from one in six to one in

three of school leavers by the year 2000. Funding to universities increased by almost a third and the policy was so successful that target numbers were reached by 1994.

The rapid expansion in student applications especially at the undergraduate level, was certainly manifested in geography departments. And as Table III shows the number of postgraduate awards across all disciplines for the period 1987-1991 grew rather than declined. The vast majority of awards for geography come from the Economic and Social Research Council and the Natural Environment Research Council, both of which have maintained a steady number of places (although the numbers are small in relation to the Science and Engineering Research Council and have not shown the same rate of increase). This increase in student numbers was stimulated by increased income for institutions that met higher student targets, although the full costs of such expansion were not met. The result has been rises in staff: student ratios and problems of library, laboratory space and equipment and shortages of living accommodation. Institutions that refused to meet their student targets were penalised. In 1993, this expansion came to an abrupt halt as per capita funding for arts and social science students was reduced by a third, severely straining the budgets of institutions that had expanded in these areas (5). Student grants are being replaced by loans and student applications have dropped once again.

The basis of research funding in the old universities has also changed, and subsequently in the new universities. A proportion of the amount for research has been taken out of the block grant

Table III Number of postgraduate awards made by the Department of Education and the Research Councils in England and Wales

Years	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90	1990/91
Total DES	1576	1609	1591	1449
Research councils				
Agric. & Food				
Research studentships	29	24	69	83
All new awards	61	65	108	110
Economic & Social				
Research studentships	269	284	246	268
All new awards	818	824	829	667
Natural Environment				
Research studentships	317	294	302	304
All new awards	539	508	536	531
Science & Engineering				
Research studentships	2519	2488	2568	3088
All new awards	4818	4884	4955	5699

Source Statistics of Education Student Awards England and Wales, Department of Education, Government Statistical Service, 1993.

Table 9 Awards for postgraduate courses made by the Department for Education and the research councils.

system and is now allocated by the research councils in open competition. In addition, each department is ranked approximately each four years, on a scale from five (excellent) to one, based on its research output, number of graduate students, and success in raising external research funds. Governmental funding to the departments is then adjusted in relationship to the rank awarded. Within geography this process has resulted in an increase in funds for technical aspects of the subject such as remote sensing and Geographical Information Systems. In the United Kingdom these are areas of the discipline well known for attracting male students.

Still the small number of women proceeding to graduate level study compared to men cannot be explained solely by external factors such as cuts in funding (although the differential allocation of funds and the prioritizing of technical aspects does promote the number of male graduates at the expense of females). And if this phenomenon cannot be explained by lower level grades, then we have to turn our attention to other factors such as a lack of self confidence, a lack of support networks of other women graduates, and the often discouraging experience of being taught predominantly by men.

Alternatively, women, as well as men, could be reassessing the value of a higher degree. The probability of acquiring a well paid academic job is low, despite the expansion in the early 1990s, and in the present economic climate the opportunity costs foregone in years of extra study and



meagre, or no, grants are too high a price to pay; the intrinsic value of a higher degree may be being overshadowed by more instrumental concerns. Although applications for graduate study tend to increase when recruitment is waning, we do not have figures for either applications or acceptances and, thus, we do not know whether women are underrepresented because they are not applying for higher degrees or because they are not being admitted for a variety of reasons.

Also of serious concern is the rate of attrition of female postgraduates. This is only too evident when we examine the ratio of female faculty and students: in 1988 there were three times as many female doctoral level students as female faculty. What can account for such a large proportion of female Ph.D. students not taking up an academic career? Rose (1993) claims that the reason, "...contemporary human geography continues to be so resistant to work on and by women" (p.3) is because of a "...fundamental resistance to women as subjects and authors of geographical knowledge" (p.3). She claims that geography's masculinist orientation derives from the choice of research themes, the belief that women are not really interested in doing geography and from the assumption that the knowledge it produces is universal. In other words, women could have nothing to add of any importance. These beliefs are also practices and are played out daily in departments, in lecture halls, in common rooms and offices. This is not to argue that all male geographers perpetuate this situation, but that people who 'do' geography predominantly adopt a masculine subject position thereby reproducing 'acceptable' geographical knowledge and the environment in which it flourishes. Geography's association with the physical environment has promoted this situation in two ways. First, dominant patriarchal ideologies put forward the notion that men are inherently better suited to carry out work in the field than women. Women

recording the data while men collect them is not an unusual occurrence. Secondly, the origins of geography in the exploration of foreign lands, demanded a kind of knowledge that had a universal application: these geographers-cum-explorers, "... made no connection between the world as it was seen and the position of the viewer, and the truth of what they saw was established by that claim to objectivity" (Rose, 1993, p.7). Not only did geographers claim to know the whole world, they also wanted to claim a whole knowledge of the world. These legacies of scientific objectivity help put into perspective why the representation of women in geography is more comparable to the natural sciences than the social sciences. None of this is to argue, however, that women are less prevalent in the field than men. In her research with women geographers active in the discipline prior to the 1950s in the United States, in teacher preparatory institutions, Monk discovered that many had a great deal of travel experience which they drew on in their teaching and there are some indications that currently women may now be more proportionately active in the field research than their male colleagues (Monk, 1994b).

These arguments also help to explain why women, without even articulating their feelings, may feel uncomfortable in establishing a career in geography. The environment is one of a plethora of 'old boy networks', which effectively inhibit the number of mentors available for female students as well as opportunities to jointly author papers, acquire information on funding sources and job opportunities and so on. Although a few 'old girl' networks are developing, there are so few women in geography who hold positions of power in the profession that they do not have a wide influence. But they do have an immediate influence on the women in and around them by providing a supportive space. However, the low number of female faculty also accounts for

the lack of role models and the subsequent small number of female students with an interest in doing research in feminist geography.

### Faculty

Table IV shows that the vast majority - 90 per cent - of positions, both temporary and permanent, in university geography departments in 1988 in the United Kingdom were filled by men, and this figure falls only 2 per cent when only permanent posts are considered (6). Of the 10 per cent of positions held by women very few are in the senior lecturer category, a position which not only provides an increase in salary and seniority but also prospects for advancement to other ranks. Among temporary, part-time and contract staff women are more equally represented, accounting for virtually the same proportion as they are in the undergraduate body i.e., approximately 43 per cent. But in absolute terms the figures are depressingly low and give no cause for celebration.

Although the number of full-time, permanent teaching staff in university geography departments increased slightly in the period 1978-1988 with the University Funding Committee academic appointments scheme (for scholars under the age of 35) and a limited amount of faculty and staff recruitment, the emphasis was on temporary 'rolling' contracts. The last few years, however, between 1989-1993 witnessed several job openings in academic geography, and the position of women improved. The balance of female and male faculty, however, remains hugely inequitable: furthermore, in 1988 11 of the old university geography departments had no women faculty and

Table IV Sex ratio of United Kingdom university geography faculty, 1978 and 1988.\*

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Status	1988 (#)		1988 (%)	1978 (%)
	Men	Women	Women	Women
Full time	591.5	43.5	6.9	7.3
Part time	19	15	44.1	44.4
Temporary or Fixed term	9	7	43.4	-
Totals	619.5	65.5	10.0	-

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\* Faculty refers to the rank of Lecturer except for the figures for full-time faculty which includes Readers and Professors.

Sources

1. Survey of United Kingdom Geography Departments, 1988.
2. McDowell, 1979.

16 employed only one woman. This extreme gender imbalance among university teaching staff may prove extremely difficult to alter.

Table Va The status of United Kingdom university faculty in 1988.

	Professors		Readers		Full time Senior Lecturers		Totals
					and Lecturers		
					(permanent & temporary)		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Women	3.5	5.3	4	6.2	58	88.5	65.5
Men	107.0	17.3	51	8.2	461.5	74.5	619.5

Source Survey of Geography Departments in the United Kingdom, 1988.

Tables Va and Vb show the relationship between gender and status in the academic hierarchy in the United Kingdom. Given the large number of male faculty it is hardly surprising that in 1988 they held 97 per cent of all university professorships and that of the 42 university departments 40 were headed by men (7). A similar situation prevailed in the new universities where women also held only 10 per cent of full time lecturing positions (although this was double the percentage in universities). And while only two of the 16 new universities had no women on their teaching staff, eight had only one woman. Figures for the 14 colleges and institutions of higher education reveal that access to faculty positions was more open to women. They held approximately a quarter i.e., 27.7 per cent, although there were still two institutions with no women on their staff and four with only one woman. Furthermore, in neither these institutions

Table Vb     The status of geography faculty in United Kingdom universities, new universities and institutes of higher education in 1988.

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	Professors	Readers	Full time	Senior Lecturers	Totals		
	and Lecturers						
	(permanent & temporary)						
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Women	3.5	3.0	4	3.4	110.5	93.6	118
Men	81.0	10.1	52	6.5	670.0	83.4	803

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Source Survey of Geography Departments in the United Kingdom, 1988.

nor the new universities were there any female heads of departments, professors or readers, although together they have 50 per cent of all female lecturers in geography (8). Thus, while women's access to posts may be easier than in the universities, they remain on the lower rungs of the ladder. The figures in Tables Va and Vb confirm the marginal position of women in the discipline; not only are they underrepresented in numerical terms but they are overrepresented in temporary and part-time positions, concentrated at the bottom end of the lecturers' scale and in lower status institutions and smaller departments with no established research programmes or

doctoral students. The male dominance of the discipline is indisputable, as is male control of the positions of power within it.

Viewed as a whole these figures do not bode well for the efficacy of affirmative action policies and programmes. Our own observations in Britain lead us to believe that there are too many "behind the scenes" activities and attitudes that can effectively hamper the implementation of such policies. The appallingly low figures of female lecturers in the 73 United Kingdom institutions have arisen from a context in which at least 57 claimed to operate an equal opportunities policy: 12 other respondents did not know whether their institutions had such a policy.

Other workplace feminist initiatives also appear to have made little headway. In the United Kingdom only one of the new universities had a lecturer in a job-share scheme, and in addition we have no figures to compare with those of associated professional bodies which release figures on membership by sex. In the United Kingdom we have simply remained ignorant of the degree of our presence in our professional organisation, the Institute of British Geographers, apart from the fact that there are usually only two or three women members of its governing body, the Council. (Somewhat ironically, in 1990, the same year that the Annual General Meeting of the IBG endorsed the first report from its recently established Equal Opportunities Working Party it elected an all male Council).

## **The Context of Teaching**

The previous section serves to illustrate that institutions of higher education in Britain are essentially patriarchal institutions: they are dominated by men and they award merit to attributes, such as competitiveness, which are conventionally associated with masculinity (McDowell, 1990). As this section reveals these institutions are also male in the context of teaching: there appears to be a reciprocal relationship between the gender composition of teaching staff and the character of the curriculum.

Although we recognise that an increase in the number of women per se is insufficient to produce changes in all aspects of academic life, women who are feminists do try to make changes to the way in which higher education is organised and structured (WGSG, 1984). One area that has received their particular attention is that of curriculum change. The low number of female lecturers, however, perpetuates a situation where the number of feminists in the discipline hardly reaches the critical mass necessary for the dissemination of feminist work throughout the geography curriculum.

Although institutional information is sparse, we do know that no women in the United Kingdom have been hired in their capacity to teach feminist geography. Thus, the extent to which feminist geography and gender issues are covered in geography undergraduate courses in the United Kingdom is unclear. Approximately a half the sample responded that these topics were covered, but in a piecemeal fashion, there being only four institutions Durham, Edinburgh and Lampeter



universities and the former Hatfield Polytechnic - where specific courses on "geography and gender" were held as second and third year options. But while options in feminist geography are not common, feminist issues are being introduced in courses related to human geography.

While there have been ongoing debates over the merits of separate courses on feminist geography (McDowell and Bowlby, 1983; Monk, 1985; Peake, 1984; Bowlby and Peake, 1989) it is obvious that at present its incorporation into the curriculum is disappointingly haphazard. Most responses to the survey were vague with statements such as 'gender issues are covered where appropriate'. Those specifying the courses in which gender issues were taught revealed that these are predominantly in social geography, Third World development and philosophical approaches/contemporary geographic thought courses. There were also a few mentions of the coverage of gender issues in courses on contemporary Britain, rural and urban geography, political and economic geography and regional specialisms. Gender issues, therefore, are seen as irrelevant to courses on resource management and human-environmental relations - of ecofeminism or of people's relation to their physical surroundings were not mentioned, and neither were - statistical and techniques courses, despite the growing amount of material on gender-pertinent issues such as data collection and the purposes for which research data are used.

The underlying impression is that gender issues are, largely, being taught in a totally inadequate manner, being reserved for a couple of seminars or lectures then rarely, if ever, mentioned again. The procedure is still to tack women on as a variable as opposed to making any serious attempts to integrate the study of gender into the discipline. Although the volume of publications

documenting the status of the teaching of feminist geography is increasing rapidly and the theoretical and epistemological significance of feminism is attracting comment in geography, as one of us recently commented, "...geographical teaching remains relatively untouched by feminism and by feminist theoretical perspectives." (McDowell, 1992 p.185). How does this situation in the United Kingdom compare to that overseas?

### **The International Scene**

There is no formal research in the United Kingdom which compares with that of the USA and Canada on female geographers experiences of discrimination, membership of professional organisations, role models, factors restricting career advancement, work in business and government or the payment of unequal salaries for equal work (Zelinsky, 1973b; Berman, 1977b; Momsen, 1980a; Kobayashi, 1985; Andrews and Moy, 1986; Sweet, 1988; and Mackenzie, 1989) (8). Neither do we have testimonies or accounts of the experiences of individual women's careers in geography (see, for example, Berman, 1982; Holcomb et. al., 1985). Fortunately, however, we have been spared the blatant sexism, often wrapped up in the mantle of social Darwinism, which was debated in North American geographic circles in the 1970s (Roder, 1977; Zelinsky, 1977; Berman, 1977a). And we do have figures on the numbers and status of women in academic geography. These figures, along with evidence from a survey on the emerging international network in feminist geography in 21 countries (Peake, 1989) provide us with

sufficient evidence to start compiling a picture of British female geographers status vis-à-vis female colleagues in a variety of countries.

Whereas in Britain in the 1980s the numbers of female students in geography were decreasing, both relative to male students and in absolute terms, in the USA (Berman, 1977, 1984; Golledge and Halperin, 1983) and Canada (Momsen, 1980a; Kobayashi, 1985; Mackenzie, 1989b) they increasing.

Over the period 1970 to 1988 the number of women rose substantially to a third of all master students and a quarter of all Ph.D. students (see Table VI). Although these proportions are the same as for the United Kingdom they arise from a different context: absolute numbers of graduate students in geography are declining in the United Kingdom but increasing in North America. This progressive picture may be largely due to the overall expansion of higher education in the last two decades and to the strength of the civil rights and women's movements. Moreover, these figures may not give an accurate picture of the actual number of women who graduate because it has been suggested, "... many women exit graduate school before receiving a Ph.D. far out of proportion to men in geography" (Beckwith, 1977, p.405). Momsen (1980a) also noted that in Canada many more women were reported to be in graduate programmes than finished their degrees. For example, in 1979 women received 14 per cent of completed masters theses but were 35 per cent of all masters students and whereas they made up 16 per cent of Ph.D. students they received only 5 per cent of Ph.D.s awarded. These figures, however, while reflecting an alarming drop out rate, also have to be considered in light of the fact that women at this time were very

Table VI Percentage of female graduate students in geography departments in the United Kingdom, Canada and the USA\*\*.

	1970			1979			1988		
	UK	Canada	USA	UK	Canada	USA	UK	Canada*	US
Masters	-	5	12	28	14	29	34	34	37
Ph.D.	-	10	5	31	5	16	31	23	27

\* Figures for Canada refer to 1987.

\*\* The figures for Canada and the USA refer to the number of masters degrees and Ph.D.s completed whereas the figures for the United Kingdom refer to the proportion of places taken by women on masters and Ph.D. programmes.

#### Sources

1. Figures for Canada from Momsen, 1980b and Mackenzie, 1989a.
2. Figures for USA for 1970 from Momsen, 1980b.
3. Figures for USA for 1979 and 1988 from the Association of American Geographers Guide to Departments (1994/95).
4. Figures for the UK for 1979 from McDowell, 1979 .

recent members of graduate schools and hence, given that North American doctorates can take several years to complete, may still have had their Ph.D. in progress (Monk, 1994b). And of those female graduates doing masters' and Ph.D.'s in the USA, between 1971 and 1977, only 25 per cent acquired jobs in academia (Rubin, 1979, and for further information on the career paths of USA female geography graduates see Andrews and Moy, 1986; Rubin, 1979; Jones, 1987; Rechlin, 1989; and Monk, 1989. For Canada see Morrison, 1982 and Mackenzie, 1989b). It would appear that, as in the United Kingdom, female graduates in geography more frequently finish their academic careers with masters degrees as opposed to Ph.D.s. This may be due to the increasing cost of academic loans needed to get through graduate studies together with comparatively low salaries in the academic job market, especially given the longer time it takes for women to become tenured and the increasing use of part-time instructors.

The low numbers of female lecturers in the United Kingdom matches the situation in North America well. As Table VII shows the figures for Canada, amalgamated from similar surveys, reveal a remarkably similar pattern of virtually no increase in the proportion of female faculty over the years 1970 to 1985. It was not until the late 1980s that there was an increase in the proportion of places held by women, to a paltry 9 per cent, or approximately 56 female faculty, only one of whom held the rank of full professor (Mackenzie, 1989b) i.e., a proportion virtually the same as that in the United Kingdom. A decade of legal action in the 1970s in Canada appears to have produced few jobs for women (Momsen, 1980b).

Table VII Percentage of geography faculty positions held by women in graduate and non-graduate university departments in the United Kingdom, Canada and the USA.

	1971/72	1978	1985	1987/88
UK	-	7.3	-	12.0
				n=72
Canada	6.2	-	6.1	9.0
	n=37		n=38	n=56
USA	3.1 (G)	4.4 (G)	-	9.7
	n=54	n=80		

\* G = graduate departments only.

Sources

1. Figures for the UK for 1978 from McDowell, 1979.
2. Figures for Canada for 1971/72 from Momsen, 1980a, for 1985 from Sweet, 1985, and for 1987/88 from Mackenzie, 1989a.
3. Figures for the USA for 1971/72 and 1978 from Rubin, 1979 and Zelinsky *et. al.*, 1982 and for 1987/88 from Lee, 1990.

In the USA there has been a small but steady increase in the number of female lecturers and not just at the bottom of the lecturing scale. Figures for the USA, for 1974, show that 14 per cent of female faculty were full professors and by 1988 this had risen to 21 per cent (of those who were members of the Association of American Geographers (AAG)) (Rechlin, 1989) (10). But Lee's (1990) study of 206 geography departments in the USA found that the percentage of female faculty was significantly higher at the lower ranks (of assistant professor and below). Moreover, in 1989 in the United States nearly 40 per cent of geography departments employed no females, either full-time or part-time, and over a third employed only one woman. Rechlin's (1989) data reveal that there has been a slow growth in the 1980s in the number of female Assistant Professors in degree granting institutions who can expect to travel up the ranks at least to Associate Professor at a fairly uniform rate with their male colleagues.

Apart from the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, figures on the proportions of female faculty are available only for Spain (García-Ramon et al., 1988), Australia (Gale, 1980 and Fahey, 1988), New Zealand (Johnston, 1989) and Denmark, where there are only two departments of geography, and Iceland, where there are only a handful of academics in geography posts, two of whom are women. And, as far as we are aware, there are only nine women - in Australia, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Taiwan and the USA - who have held posts as feminist geographers either in geography departments or in women's studies units.

In her survey Peake (1989) found that the earliest courses on feminist geography began in the USA, the Netherlands and Denmark in the late 1970s. (For information on the USA courses see

Gruntfest, 1989 as well as Monk, 1994a and Monk et. al., 1993.) All other courses started in the 1980s, most of them towards the end of the decade. While a couple focus on rural geography (for example, at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain and at Sao Paulo University, Brazil) the remainder have a generalist orientation encompassing both empirical and theoretical work. These include various courses in Canadian universities, at Frankfurt University in Germany, at Thessaloniki and Athens universities in Greece, at Waikato University in New Zealand, at Amsterdam and Nijmegen universities in the Netherlands and at Basel and Berne universities in Switzerland. Most of these courses are optional, either in the final year of undergraduate study or offered as graduate level courses.

For those in non-English speaking countries, a lack of teaching materials in their own language has exacerbated this situation. Other factors, such as an emphasis on physical geography, for example, as in Taiwan (Chiang, 1989), on geography as a teacher-training subject as, for example, in the German-speaking countries (Binder, 1989), and on a technocratic-style geography, for example, as in France (Fagnani, 1989) where recent developments in teaching and research are primarily associated with computerised cartography, remote sensing and GIS have also hindered the acceptance of feminism as a geographic perspective. Even in those countries where radical geographers play a large part in determining the agenda for geography, a focus on class and an emphasis on production has only recently begun to give way to a recognition of the social dimensions of gender, a process encouraged by economic restructuring and women's large scale entry into the workforce. Furthermore, feminist geographers have not tended to publish their work in interdisciplinary journals leading to a lack of interest in, and knowledge of, feminist



geography by feminists in other social sciences. Consequently, until relatively recently with the reassertion of the social construction of space in cultural and postmodern studies, there have been few collaborative ventures and stimuli from outside the discipline, although links have been forged on individual levels and in the Netherlands and Canada, for example, there are strong links with policy makers (Mackenzie, 1989a; Karsten, 1989).

Table VIII Percentage of female members of the CAG and AAG.

	1970	1978	1980	1985	1987	1989
CAG	-	15.3	-	23.4	-	26.8
AAG	12.3	18.4	20.2	21.6	23.1	-

Sources

1. CAG 1978 and AAG 1980 from Momsen, 1980b.
2. CAG 1985 from Kobayashi, 1985.
3. AAA 1970 from Zelinsky, 1973b.
4. AAG 1978-87 from AAG Membership Profiles, AAG Newsletters.
5. CAG 1989 from Mackenzie, 1989a.

Because of these factors academic institutional bases for feminist geography exist in only seven countries: Australia, Britain, Canada, India, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the USA. In Australasia and the Netherlands groups were only officially recognised by professional societies in 1988, whereas in the USA the Committee on the Status of Women in Geography (CSWG) dates from the early 1970s, the Geographical Perspectives on Women group (GPOW) from the late 1970s and the Women and Geography Study Group(s) (WGSG) of the Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG) and the Institute of British Geographers (IBG) were both formed in 1982. We also know that both in the USA and Canada approximately a quarter of the members of the CAG and AAG were female by the late 1980s (see Table VIII). Feminist geographers in other countries, for example, in South Africa, are also active currently in forming networks with the hopes of establishing institutional bases.

It is only in those countries with well established institutional bases that research and teaching texts have been published (Andrew and Milroy, 1988; Little, Peake and Richardson, 1988; Mazey and Lee, 1983; Momsen and Townsend, 1986; Rengert and Monk, 1982; Rose, 1993; Women and Geography Study Group, 1984). And, although throughout the 1980s the number of articles published from several countries has steadily increased, frequently this is the output of only a handful of women academics (see Lee, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993; and Peake, 1989 for comprehensive bibliographies). However, in those few countries with well established institutional bases a good of networking occurs, evidenced by the women and geography study groups' newsletters that have been appearing for most of the decade. In the Netherlands no newsletters have yet been produced, but the German-speaking countries (Austria, Germany and

Switzerland) published their first newsletter in late 1988. The Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) for the last nine years have been holding their own conferences on feminist geography; and links between European feminist geographers are now established. For example, under the auspices of the Erasmus (European Universities) Network a number of feminist geography residential courses for undergraduate students have been held between the universities of Durham and Sheffield in the United Kingdom, Amsterdam, Thessaloniki and Athens in Greece, Roskilde in Denmark and the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Joint conferences have been held between Dutch and British feminist geographers in 1986 and in 1989 between British and German-speaking feminist geographers. British feminist geographers have also been invited to attend the Nordic conferences. And a feminist geography conference held in Britain in April, 1989 on gender and Third World development attracted over 80 participants from 28 countries, mostly African and Asian. The culmination of these networking initiatives was the (August 1988) establishment of the International Geographical Union Study Group on Gender and Geography which now has about 400 members in over 50 countries (Monk, 1994b) (11).

After 15 years of publications, establishing study groups, networking and lobbying feminist geography has finally achieved international recognition by the geographic community (see Peake, 1989). These achievements, however, have not been easily won, as is evidenced by the contexts of higher education within which geographers work.

## Conclusion

Overall, the period of the 1980s appears to have been one of a slow rolling backwards in the United Kingdom; this is a situation which does not provide a context for radical new initiatives, given also that the vast majority of faculty in the profession are the same men who controlled it ten years ago. The future of women's place within the discipline in the United Kingdom remains uncertain as does the expansion of feminist geography. On the one side cuts in higher education affected the ability of women to enter the discipline or to move out of marginal positions, thus leaving the same faculty in place and reducing the likelihood of radical initiatives. The right-wing sweep of the economy also stifled feminist initiatives within academia, such as mainstreaming feminist courses into the curriculum or of gender-balancing existing courses. Within academia there has also been the increasing technocratisation of the discipline and the associated pressure on subjects in higher education to be directly marketable. Despite the expansion in student numbers in the late 1980s and early 1990s little appears to have changed; it could well take until the end of the decade before it becomes clear whether this expansion has benefitted women in the discipline.

But the context within which we work also has a positive side. Many geographers now recognise the new "ism" that is on the geographic agenda. Though the rate of change has been slow, feminist geographers in Britain and other countries have had an impact beyond their numbers. Gains have been made, indeed some would argue, substantial gains, such as second print runs of the first feminist geography textbook, a new journal of feminist geography, Gender, Place and

Culture, initiation of a book series by Routledge Press entitled "International Studies of Women and Place", increasing membership of study groups and a growing number of conference sessions (including 25 GPOW sponsored sessions at the 1995 Annual Conference of the AAG) and a working party of equal opportunities being established within the IBG. But we would argue that the intervention of feminism is not an irreversible process.

The retention and future expansion of feminist geography depends largely on the future collective commitment of young scholars and changes in the ideological climate. Without addressing academic status hierarchies and the social construction of knowledge, the sex composition of geography departments will be maintained, and women and feminists will remain marginal to the discipline. Men still control the profession but with the coming waves of retirements women do have a chance to enter it if those already employed in departments, both male and female, take active steps to ensure women are employed.

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank Janice Monk for her comments on an earlier draft, and the Southwest Institute for Research on Women at the University of Arizona where Linda Peake initially worked on this paper.

## Endnotes

1. Similar surveys have been conducted for United States, Canadian, Australian and Spanish geography departments (see Beckwith, 1977; Gale, 1980; García-Ramon et al., 1988; Golledge and Halperin, 1983; Jones, 1987; Kobayashi, 1985; Leach, 1976; Leffler, 1965; Momsen, 1980a, 1980b; Rubin, 1979; and Zelinsky, 1973a, 1973b; Zelinsky, Monk and Hanson, 1982).
2. From 1st April, 1993 under the Higher and Further Education Act (1992) all the former polytechnics and universities joined together under the Higher Education Council for England (there are separate funding councils for Wales and for Scotland). Progress towards this amalgamation began in 1989 when the polytechnics were taken from the control of the Local Education Authorities. British universities only provide academic degrees whereas polytechnics serviced both academic and professional/technical qualifications, as do colleges and institutions of higher education, although the latter tend to be less prestigious institutions with most students drawn from the local area.
3. This is roughly equivalent to a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.3 or more (on a 4.0 scale).
4. In the United Kingdom the majority of students would take three years to acquire a degree and most of these will pass with honours. All degrees are at honours level except for the category of Pass which is counted as an Ordinary degree. And only the second class category is subdivided into upper - 2.1 - and lower - 2.2 - divisions.

5. The University of Essex, for example, with highly rated humanities and social science departments had a financial deficit of £900,000 at the beginning of the academic year 1993/4.
6. This distribution is worse than the average for United Kingdom universities over all disciplines. In 1986, women constituted 3 per cent of professors, 6 per cent of senior lecturers and 15 per cent of lecturers.
7. The two exceptions are Glasgow and the Open University. There is also a female professor at Kings College, London (although she is not the head of the department) and a woman holding a joint professorial appointment in geography and anthropology at University College, London.
8. In September 1992 a female professor of geography was appointed at the former Nottingham Polytechnic.
9. Jones's (1987) study of 107 female members of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) with advanced degrees shows that 60 per cent of the women cited the role female faculty members played in persuading them to go on to graduate school. It should be kept in mind that Jones only achieved a 50 per cent response rate to her survey (also see Truelove, 1983; and Fahey, 1988 for competing accounts on the validity of the role model thesis).
10. The AAG set up a Committee on Affirmative Action in 1979.
11. The Study Group became a Commission in August 1992.

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