

Gender and Habitus: An Editorial Introduction

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This special issue of Geography Research Forum is different to many previous issues of the journal. All the papers which comprise this issue are authored by women. The papers were first presented at the Habitus 2000: A Sense of Place conference in Perth in 2000; a conference that was inspired by the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu and his notion of the habitus as 'a sense of one's place'. The papers published in this issue represent a feminized habitus. This editorial introduction offers a brief overview of Bourdieu's concept of the habitus and seeks to locate the individual articles, offering readers a sense of their contextual place.

SPACE, GENDER AND HABITUS

Pierre Bourdieu expands the notion of space to include not only physical, geographical space, but also social space: 'the locus of the coexistence of social positions, mutually exclusive points, which, for the occupants, are the basis of points of view' (Bourdieu, 2000:130).

The habitus is defined as 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations' (Bourdieu, 1990:53). The habitus is thus a sense of one's (and others') place and role in the world of one's lived environment. As the papers in this issue clearly demonstrate, habitus is an embodied, as well as a cognitive, sense of place.

Habitus is the product of history. As such, it is 'an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:133). As the papers will indicate, habitus may be reasonably durable, but it is not unchangeable.

The authors in this collection provide a means to comprehend the multiplicity of ways in which gender operates to underpin, and in some cases to refigure, everyday practices. They explore some of the 'deep-seated institutional practices (which) have the effect of transforming social situations into scenes for the performance of genderisms by both sexes' (Goffman, 1977:325). In so doing, they indicate examples of the socially structured spaces (which Bourdieu terms 'fields') in which women attempt to define, change or improve their situations within networks of relations.

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As will become evident from the individual papers, the fields in which women live and act are fields of struggle between the strategies of various agents. The strategies which specific agents adopt depend on their position in the field and whether they are dominant or dominated. The authors show us how women struggle in fields and in 'games' in which their positions are defined by the (usually male) structure of the distribution of power and how, in certain circumstances, women can actually succeed in transforming, partly or completely, the rules of the game.

The habitus is therefore a practical, if not always a reflexive, adaptation to the basic conditions of existence. The papers exemplify situations of women's practical competence in their everyday lifeworlds. Habitus is more than simply a state of mind. It is a practical state of being and doing.

REFLEXIVITY

All of the papers in this issue implicitly or explicitly tell stories of women operating reflexively within the fields in which they find themselves located. They tell of women living in lifeworlds not entirely constructed by them, and who engage in structured improvisations in order to cope.

The papers represent examples of reflexivity by individual researchers: Rose Williams reflects on the social origins and coordinates of herself as a white Wadjella woman in Australia attempting to reflexively self-reconcile and to reconcile with her 'neighbors' in their Indigenous world; Kerry Williams, a ceramic artist, demonstrates the 'reflexive vigilance' which Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:88) suggest must be exercised 'with special force whenever we deal with culture, art or science'.

Bourdieuian reflexivity encompasses not only individual reflexivity, however, but also reflexivity as a collective response to concrete problems to be solved practically. In this respect, Rose Williams moves beyond the habitus of a sense of her own place ("I am the past, I am the present and I am the future"), to offer a series of 'dimensions of healing' through which a collective Australia can take part in reconciliation from the heart.

Kristine Jerome illustrates the role of language as a practical gate-keeping mechanism for women in a refuge where they are able to find escape from masculinities, including male-perpetrated domestic violence. Language empowers the women and legitimizes the everyday practices of the refuge.

Christina Lindkvist Scholten shows us women's possibilities in geographically remote rural Sweden for self-support in a patriarchal economic society. The Swedish women argue for practical solutions to their problems, establishing businesses at home.

Deirdre McKay demonstrates how women Overseas Contract Workers (OCW) similarly often attempt to establish their own businesses on return to their remote Filipino community. McKay's paper also beautifully illustrates the ambivalence of non-OCW women for the returnees, as they imitate and mimic a perceived OCW

habitus, acting out a bodily story of OCW femininity in a fashion show as a practical statement of their emotional feelings.

Katie Lloyd Thomas also investigates practical solutions to problems; on this occasion to that of architectural orthography, a 'paradigm of the possibility of universal and neutral truth', which is yet a masculine truth, heavily gender-blind. Lloyd Thomas offers us a range of feminist alternatives, such as painterly color and tone, to the norm of 'lines in practice' as places where we might begin to explore the 'unthought categories of thought' (Bourdieu, 1982:10) and to change a too-pervasive architectural habitus.

THE 'WRETCHEDNESS OF WOMEN'

The papers in this issue illustrate how women 'are essentially the personification of exigencies actually or potentially inscribed in the structure of the field or, more precisely, in the position occupied within this field' (Bourdieu, 1989:449). The papers demonstrate various forms of women facing and engaging in reflexivity as they explore the 'wretchedness of women'; the paradox of determinism (wretchedness) and freedom or knowing one's determination (greatness) (Bourdieu, 2000:130–131).

Kerry Williams' dramatic character, 'Appropriated Alice', wretchedly juggles the patriarchal expectations of women's everyday life, finding faith in a 'sleeping grotto which timing will color benign' and greatness in a garden.

Many of Christina Lindkvist Scholten's Swedish women are unable to disentangle the paradox as they establish their own businesses, predominantly undertaking types of jobs which 'do not challenge the norms of the local (male) labor market'. Even the horticulturalist, Anne, found clients difficult to obtain as her gardening business was seen as posing a threat to the pre-existing male horticulturalist in the area. Women, such as Anne, are victims of a habitus of gendered conceptions of women's and men's places. No greatness in the garden here. It is questionable whether greater reflexivity on the part of these women would permit them to affect the field in which they move sufficiently to afford them greater freedom of action.

Kristine Jerome paints a strong portrait of women's self-determination in the refuge. She demonstrates how the several women and the sole man in the refuge have linguistically constructed a feminist gendered sense of their own place and those of the others. The refuge is a women's space, where women are empowered and where the male is rendered deviant in a reversal of the habitus typically prevailing in the outside world.

Deirdre McKay's Filipino women present a bodily performance of habitus: a dramatic act, resonating with that of Appropriated Alice. In their interpretation of 'doing gender' at a village fair, the Filipino women map the habitus of a sense of their own place and that of the Overseas Contract Workers. The masquerade epitomizes the paradox of the wretchedness of women seeking their own determinations in local and international lifeworlds of determinism.

Katie Lloyd Thomas' examples of women's struggles to overcome an architectural wretchedness offer us hope of a built environment shaped by women, beyond the Derridean, 'women, like writing, are always in an already fallen position with respect to architecture' (Ingraham, 1996:157). It will not be easy, but it is possible for women to achieve greatness in such a field.

The six papers which follow provide a commentary on women's sense of place and the lived meanings of 'home' and its material production through bodily practices. Whether in the Philippines, Sweden or Australia, in the refuge, the garden, the architectural imaginary or the heart, 'home' is discursively constituted through language, emotions and gestures which comprise the habitus.

These papers, inspired by notions of the habitus, are presented in this special issue of *Geography Research Forum* in the spirit of women's self-determination; in the words of Rose Williams: to 'engender hope that power for healing really is in our hands, every one of us, and that for those looking on ... as relationships are being wrought, that this ... relational shift is in fact the beginning of something'; the self-determination and greatness of women.

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