

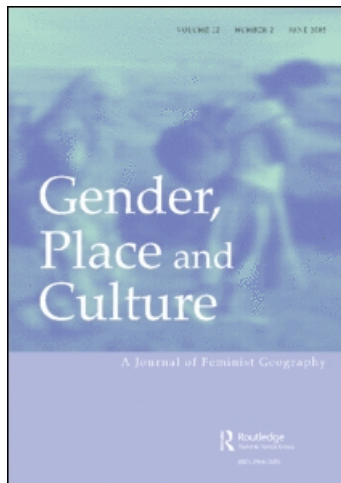
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Marianna Pavlovskaya^a

^a Department of Geography, Hunter College, CUNY Graduate Center, New York, NY, USA

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Honoring Susan Hanson's 45 years in geography

Marianna Pavlovskaya*

Department of Geography, Hunter College, CUNY Graduate Center, 695 Park Ave., New York, NY 10065, USA

The essays in this themed section honor Susan Hanson's 45 years in geography. They are written by senior academic geographers who participated in a series of panels at the Annual meeting of the Association of the American Geographers in Boston in 2008 that celebrated Susan's scholarship and her impact on the discipline of geography.

Keywords: Susan Hanson; feminist geography; economic geography; gender and geography

Introduction

In spring 2008, Hanson's colleagues, students, and friends celebrated her 45 years in academic geography. At the annual meeting of the Association of the American Geographers in Boston, her students put together three panels in honor of her scholarship and contribution. Two dozen speakers celebrated Susan's scientific, political and personal impact on the discipline, its content and people. Following the panels, the School of Geography at Clark University, Susan's life-long academic home, generously supported a reception in her honor.

This section includes five essays that emerged from the panel sessions. While the essays offered by Jan Monk, Sophie Bowlby, Vicky Lawson, Gerry Pratt, Sara McLafferty and Valerie Preston do not provide a comprehensive evaluation of Susan Hanson's scholarship, they reflect upon Susan's influence on geography as a discipline and they capture some of the challenges that feminist geographers, including Susan, have faced at various stages of their careers. Read together, these essays help us to understand what it takes to start a feminist revolution in an academic discipline, a quiet revolution that requires the transformation of both our scholarly and personal lives that – as feminist thinkers have taught us – have always been profoundly intertwined.

A prominent researcher, an inspiring professor, a caring mentor and a leader in the discipline, Susan Hanson has accomplished more than most in the last 45 years, and she has done so in a field where women were largely absent when Susan entered it in the 1960s. Susan's academic work and life have not only advanced geographic research on women but have helped to profoundly transform the discipline of geography in feminist terms. Her presence in the discipline has also made a lasting impact on the work lives of her students, many of whom now thrive in academic and non-academic professional jobs.

According to Susan herself, she discovered geography while at Middlebury College in the 1960s because she took a course with an outstanding geography professor. She earned a PhD in geography from Northwestern University in 1973 and became a tenured professor

*Email: mpavlov@hunter.cuny.edu

at SUNY Buffalo where her position was split between the departments of geography and sociology. In 1981 she took a job at Clark University where she has worked ever since. For many years, Hanson led Clark's School of Geography and currently serves there as a research professor. Her academic productivity is extraordinary: seven books and over 100 research articles, commentaries, book chapters and other publications. Her pioneering work on gender and employment, travel-activity patterns, feminist approaches to scholarship, and the importance of gender as a category of analysis have inspired several (academic) generations of feminist geographers. Hanson's accomplishments are widely recognized within and beyond geography. Susan is one of the past Presidents of the Association of American Geographers, she is a Guggenheim Fellow and she is the first female geographer elected to both the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

This impressive (but very much truncated for lack of space) list of accomplishments constitutes what Trevor Barnes has called the 'lives lived' of academics – their formally recorded achievements that create an impression of inevitable success (Barnes 2001). Behind this narrative of linear progress, however, hides 'lives told'. Lives told, often by academics themselves, recount personal biographies, struggles and contingencies; they disrupt the predetermined paths of 'lives lived' and produce histories that may be messy, irrational, and personal but also open to previously overlooked struggles, whether won or lost.

To the surprise of many, but perhaps unsurprising from the perspective of 'lives told', Susan refers to herself as an 'accidental academic' (Hanson 2005, unpublished manuscript) who applied to graduate school almost by chance and whose initial career was non-linear and full of setbacks – including an initial denial of tenure. The essays that follow also cast Susan's professional life as a 'life told' where work, home, broad disciplinary contexts and personal relationships (with colleagues, family, friends and students) at various points in Susan's career fuse together such that we can no longer tell them apart. As Vicky Lawson puts it, Susan's life can be viewed as a 'composition', never fully predetermined but always created with every step, accomplishment, interaction, setback, disappointment, courage and generosity. Moreover, as a product of both her deeds and the social contexts in which they took place, Susan's life is no longer just a personal story but is, simultaneously, a story of academia as a social institution whose practices, aspirations and everyday workings have dramatically changed over the last several decades. Reflecting upon Susan's contribution to and influence upon academia, the following essays make it clear that change never happens on its own but only as a result of the sustained, often contradictory and never perfectly structured, effort of the actors involved. In this case, the actors include the first feminist geographers, their few mentors, their many peers, colleagues, partners and friends, as well as students and all others with whom they interacted directly or tangentially but still profoundly over the course of their complicated lives. Finally, what also transpires from these essays is that Susan's 'life told' has always been driven by both academic and non-academic concerns. In both cases, caring for others has always been paramount. It becomes obvious throughout these essays how Susan's academic success is a product of all these different, yet integrated, concerns.

While the contributors recognize the scholarly impact of Susan's work, they, importantly, offer unique perspectives on the impact of Susan's public persona on them and on geography over the span of several decades. Sophie Bowlby, a longtime friend and colleague, opens the collection by reminiscing on her and Susan's times together in graduate school in the 1960s. Sophie demonstrates how this experience necessitated not only their future commitment to research on gender but to a radically different pedagogy.

The following essay is by Jan Monk, a past president of the AAG and a prominent geographer of Susan's generation. Together, Jan and Susan challenged geographers and the discipline of geography in their call to not (continue to) exclude half of humanity – women – from geographic inquiry (Monk and Hanson 1982). Jan here analyzes the world of geography in the 1970s, the time when Susan's professional career was just beginning after earning her PhD in 1973. In the next essay Gerry Pratt talks about her spirited feminist collaboration with Susan while working at Clark University on a research project that combined qualitative and quantitative methods and worked, generally, to bring feminist theory to the fore. It resulted in several articles and the now classic co-authored book *Gender, Work, and Space* (1995). Vicky Lawson, another past president of the AAG, examines Susan's career as a composition with a multitude of effects (many unknown to her!) and enacted through a variety of her interactions with colleagues and students. Lastly, Sara McLafferty and Valerie Preston, who became familiar with Susan's feminist work while in graduate school in the 1980s, explain why and how its emphasis on everyday life and 'embodied people' has provided for so many scholars an alternative to the, at the time, gender-blind worlds of logical positivism and structuralism. They finish their essay by linking Susan's scholarship to contemporary feminist research in geography.

The three panels at the AAG provided a forum to about two dozen speakers – from Susan's early colleagues to her past and current students. Because it is impossible to include them all here, this themed section is authored only by senior feminist geographers whose insights clearly constitute a contextualized history of geography. As a former student of Susan, however, I would like to emphasize that many of her graduate and undergraduate students felt compelled to talk specifically about her mentoring. It is clear that caring for students has been a fundamental part of Susan's university work. She has served as advisor to dozens of undergraduate students and over 20 PhD students. She has mentored many more in the classroom and as a member of their advising committees. At the AAG panels, students commented over and over again on the incredible support they received from Susan. Some stories about her mentoring style have been circulating as legends about, for example, her amazing ability to immediately return drafts with detailed comments (even from a hospital bed!), to constantly encourage her students, to be consistently open intellectually, and to be endlessly understanding and patient. This type of mentoring is a powerful feminist strategy that transforms the academy at its core by bringing an ethics of care into what largely – although not exclusively – has been a masculinist and competitive environment. No less important, and mentioned by many, was Susan's presence at Clark University's School of Geography where her students had to happily admit that they took it for granted that women can be powerful and should hold positions of leadership in academia and the world.

Finally, the very fact that in addition to her career, Susan has raised two children and shared parenting with her partner Perry, also an academic geographer (see essays by Jan Monk, Gerry Pratt, and Vicky Lawson in this issue; Hanson 2005), has inspired many students and colleagues (female and male) to pursue lives that combine professional employment with caring responsibilities for others, something they now consider possible. Not only has Susan's work advocated against the gendered status quo but her own life has transgressed traditional expectations on many counts and occasions.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the contributors to this special section, all participants of the panels, and the many colleagues and students of Susan's who came to this event. Their willing and generous participation created so much warmth and joy. Kevin Keenan, a PhD student at Clark University, skillfully employed his unlimited

managerial talents organizing the panels and the reception. Jean Heffernan, Assistant to the Director of the Graduate School of Geography at Clark and Clark's Alumni office were very helpful in providing contact information for numerous students. The Graduate School of Geography director, Billie Lee Turner, and Clark's Provost (also a geography professor) David Angel were both extremely supportive and mobilized the energies and means of the Alumni organization that made both the panels and the reception a great success. In conjunction with the panels, the Geographic Perspectives on Women specialty group of the Association of the American Geographers has announced a new dissertation proposal award in the name of Susan Hanson. Finally, all of Susan's students offered their spirited enthusiasm and assistance. Among those, special thanks go to Lydia Savage, Melissa Gilbert, and the late Glen Elder, whose profound commitment and vital contribution to critical human and feminist geography will be sorely missed.

Acknowledgements

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Notes on contributor

Marianna Pavlovskaya is an Associate Professor of Geography at Hunter College and CUNY Graduate Center. She has a MA in geography from Moscow State University and a PhD in geography from Clark University. Her major field is urban geography with a focus on neo-liberal transition in post-socialist Russia, the constitution of class and gender in Moscow and New York City, and rethinking the economy as a site of heterogeneity and possibility. In addition, her work critically examines geo-spatial technologies and their role in production of social worlds.

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ABSTRACT TRANSLATION

Honrando los 45 años de Susan Hanson en geografía

Los ensayos en esta sección temática honran los 45 años de Susan Hanson en geografía. Están escritos por importantes geógrafos académicos que participaron en una serie de paneles en la Reunión Anual de la Asociación de Geógrafos Estadounidenses en Boston, en 2008, que celebró la trayectoria de investigación de Susan y su impacto en la disciplina de la geografía.

Palabras clave: Susan Hanson; geografía feminista; geografía económica; género y geografía

向苏珊韩森在地理学界45年的贡献致敬

这部份是以「为苏珊韩森在地理学界45年的贡献致敬」为主题的多篇文章。作者为资深的地理学者们，他们在波士顿所举行的2008年美国地理学年会中参与了表扬苏珊的学术成就以及她对地理学界之影响的专题讨论会。

关键词：苏珊韩森; 女性主义地理学; 经济地理学; 性别与地理学