

# The Women Were Always Welcome at Clark\*

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**Abstract:** In absolute and relative terms, since its founding in 1921, the Graduate School of Geography at Clark University has played a major role in educating women geographers. This article examines the period from the 1920s to the early 1970s, when Clark was most distinctive in its representation of women in comparison to other institutions. I examine patterns of enrollment, how the women came to choose Clark, their experiences of the institution and of the job market, and the regional, national, and international connections of Clark women. I pay attention to the women's perspectives and to their relationships with faculty and alumni, especially founding director Wallace Atwood, questioning whether Ellen Churchill Semple's presence on the Clark faculty in its first decade had any positive effect on women students' relations to Clark. The themes are analyzed in relation to currents in the institution, the discipline, American higher education, and gender roles in U.S. society. Key issues that emerge are the occupational segregation within the discipline before the 1960s, which led to women being associated primarily with teacher training institutions and, to some extent, women's colleges; Atwood's commitment to geographic education; the importance of Clark networks; and the women's valuing of a collaborative atmosphere and of field education.

**Key words:** Clark University, geography, women graduate students, institutional climate.

Since its founding in 1921, the Graduate School of Geography at Clark University has consistently been among the largest producers of professional geographers in the United States. Though its history has been interpreted in congratulatory and critical ways (*Graduate School of Geography* 1931; *Clark Graduate School of Geography* 1946; Atwood 1946; Berman 1974, 1984; Cohen 1971;<sup>1</sup> Koelsch 1979,

1980, 1987, 1988; Murphy 1979; Prunty 1979), its role in training women geographers has barely been noted, other than in Mildred Berman's autobiographical reflections (1984). Yet Clark has been the predominant institution in the number of graduate degrees in geography granted to women and stands out for the proportion of degrees granted to women. In this article, my goals are to document and interpret Clark's production of women geographers in relation to historical currents in U.S. geography, higher education, and society and to explore the interplay between the perspectives of the personalities involved and their contexts. I will deal primarily with women as students between the 1920s and the early 1970s, years in which Clark is most distinctive. I will not examine the recent past, a time when women's participation in the profession (as students and as

\*I appreciate the assistance of Bill Koelsch and Dorothy Mosakowski in pointing me to materials in the Clark University Archives; the hospitality of Susan Hanson; research assistance by Stuart Lorkin; aid with manuscript preparation by Kathy Norris; the Clark women graduates who gave me their time and stories; and the comments of three anonymous reviewers. The phrase "The women were always welcome at Clark" comes from an interview with a 1930s graduate.

<sup>1</sup> The only reference to women in this 1971 volume is by Alice Higgins, chair of the Board of Trustees, who notes that the stained glass in the office shows a woman gazing at a globe, and

says, "Maybe Dr. Cohen is a Women's Liberation man—I'm not sure about that" (Cohen 1971, 12–13).

faculty) has changed in scope and magnitude, at Clark as well as nationally. My interpretations primarily reflect information gained from the Atwood files in the Clark University archives, from *The Monadnock*, the magazine of the Graduate School of Geography (which from 1927 to 1981 included detailed information on students, faculty, and alumni), and from extended interviews with ten women who studied at Clark between the mid-1930s and the 1970s.<sup>2</sup>

### The Production of Women Geographers at Clark

Although directly comparable data are not readily available across U.S. institutions, complementary sources of evidence demonstrate the major and sustained role played by Clark in providing graduate education in geography to women. Over 30 percent of doctoral dissertations in geography written by women in the United States up to 1969 were completed at Clark, more than double the number awarded at its nearest "competitor," the University of Chicago (Table 1). Between 1921 and 1969, women earned 39 (18.4 percent) of the 212 Ph.D.s awarded in geography at Clark and 132 (34.4 percent) of the 384 M.A.s (for whom sex of recipient can be identified).<sup>3</sup> While the number of degrees awarded to women partly reflects a depart-

ment's longevity and overall productivity, in contrast to Clark, other enduring departments that granted a large number of advanced degrees awarded them in greater proportions, sometimes almost entirely, to men, though distinctions were less marked in the awarding of M.A.s than Ph.D.s. Between 1905 and 1969, Chicago granted 151 doctorates in geography, 17 (11.3 percent) of them to women, and 382 masters, 144 (37.7 percent) to women (calculated from list of doctoral dissertations, Geography Department Records). Berkeley granted 77 doctorates in geography between 1927 and 1969, only one to a woman; it awarded 139 masters between 1908 and 1969 (for whom sex of recipient can be identified), 30 (21.6 percent) of them to women.<sup>4</sup>

The relative significance of Clark for women's professional participation is demonstrated in Rechlin's (1992) analysis of members of the Association of American Geographers in 1967. Of the ten departments that had granted the most doctorates to members, only Columbia (including Teachers College) comes close to Clark in the ratio of men to women (Clark 4.9:1, Columbia 6.4:1). Others range from 16.7:1 (Northwestern) to 58.0:0 (Berkeley). The situation in geography is not anomalous. Rossiter's (1982, 1995) studies of American women scientists similarly point to the dominant role of particular departments and institutions in educating women, and especially to the importance of private and smaller institutions over the large state universities in the percentages of their science

<sup>2</sup> Because my interviews covered personal as well as professional lives, I guaranteed confidentiality to the women with whom I spoke. I will identify them by the period of their association with Clark as students. The interviews have been collected over the last decade as part of a larger project that includes interviews with approximately 60 women geographers representing different cohorts, specialties, institutions, and relationships with the profession. The Clark women ranged in age from their late 30s to their late 80s at the time the interviews took place; their perspectives and discourses are thus filtered through different generational perspectives.

<sup>3</sup> Data on Clark Ph.D.s were derived from the Registrar's List, Clark University Archives.

Data for M.A.s for 1921-46 were obtained from *The Clark Graduate School of Geography* (1946, 91-161) and for 1947-69 from Commencement programs held in the Clark University Archives.

<sup>4</sup> M.A.s awarded under Plan I, thesis option, and Plan II, by examination (introduced in 1966). Calculated from data in Parsons (1983). Four additional masters were awarded, but the sex of the recipients cannot be determined with certainty from the names.

Table 1

## Doctoral Dissertations in Geography by Women in the United States, 1900–1969

Number of Degrees	Institution
39	Clark
17	Chicago
9	Wisconsin
5	Columbia Teachers College; Iowa
4	North Carolina; Northwestern; Washington
3	Illinois; Pennsylvania State; Nebraska
2	Boston; Columbia; Johns Hopkins; Maryland; Michigan; Ohio State
1	UC-Berkeley; UCLA; George Washington; Louisiana State; Michigan State; Minnesota; New York; Oregon; George Peabody; Pittsburgh; Syracuse; Radcliffe; Texas; Yale
Total: 122	

*Source:* Compilers of lists of dissertations have used different criteria for inclusion. This list includes Ed.D.s as well as Ph.D.s and degrees awarded to “geographers” in geology and geography/education programs. Where sex cannot readily be inferred from the graduate’s name (or confirmed from other sources), the recipient has been omitted. The list was compiled by cross-referencing Browning (1970); Dunbar (1992); Hewes (1946); Parsons (1983); Whittlesey (1935). Clark data were verified from the Registrar’s lists in the University Archives and Chicago data with the list of master’s theses and doctoral dissertations, Geography Department Records.

(including social science) doctorates granted to women.

Though Clark’s involvement in preparing women geographers has been persistent, it has varied over time. In some peri-

ods, women have been better represented in the student body than others. Notes and photographs in *The Monadnock* reveal the changes (see Fig. 1). The proportion of women increased not so much as a function



Figure 1. The field camp group, 1928. *Source:* *The Monadnock* (1928).

of changes in their number, except in the mid- to late 1970s, but in relation to declines in the number of men, for example, during World War II and in the early to mid-1970s. The issue of representation requires looking not only at numbers, however, but also at who these women were, how they were similar to or different from the men students, and what circumstances were associated with their coming to Clark.

### Wallace Atwood and the Recruitment of Women

The history of the Graduate School of Geography at Clark and the career of Wallace Atwood as director and simultaneously president of the university have been carefully explored by William Koelsch (1979, 1980, 1987, 1988). Threaded through his writings are references to Atwood's work in geographic education: as a teacher at the secondary school and junior college levels, in a teacher training institution, in adult and museum education; his early association with educational reformers John Dewey and Frances W. Parker; his authorship of best-selling school texts; his co-authorship of the *Worcester Course of Study in Geography* for grades four through eight (see also Atwood n.d.); and his initiation of the New England Geography Conference,<sup>5</sup> which held most of its annual meetings at Clark from its founding in 1922 until the 1950s. In these endeavors, Atwood encountered many women geographers and drew on them for his programs and as collaborators. For example, at the 1922 conference, which addressed "The Training of Teachers of Geography," Miss Mabel Stark of the State Normal School at Salem spoke on aspects of geography that should be emphasized in the normal schools, a topic she had negotiated in correspondence with Atwood (Mabel C. Stark to Atwood, December 29, 1921, Atwood Papers (here-

<sup>5</sup> Subsequently the New England/St. Lawrence Valley Division of the Association of American Geographers.

after AP)). Many of his school texts were co-authored with Helen Goss Thomas and one with his wife, Harriet T. B. Atwood, who had been a fellow teacher in the University of Chicago Laboratory School (Koelsch 1979). Other women contributed to the workbooks accompanying his texts. These experiences, as well as changes in higher education in New England and nationally, shaped Atwood's dealings with women geographers.

Although women were not eligible for Clark's B.A.s till 1942, from the early years of Atwood's regime Clark admitted women to summer school and correspondence courses. Initially, credit for the summer school courses had to be transferred toward degrees in other institutions, such as the Worcester Normal School (Atwood to Verna B. Flanders, April 24, 1923, AP), but after 1923 teachers could apply these credits to a newly approved B.Ed. degree that was explicitly aimed at women. Candidates could qualify for the B.Ed. provided they completed at least one-fourth of their degree work in summer school or in residence as "special students" during the academic year or through home study courses.<sup>6</sup> These programs put Atwood in contact with many women teachers, especially those on the faculties of the normal schools in New England. Verna Flanders and Amy Ware of Salem Normal School both took Clark summer courses (Berman 1988), as did Ella Keene of Plymouth Normal, who continued on for the B.Ed. (Dow 1988a). Atwood's model for the Graduate School also highlighted education:

Our conception of a School of Geography can be much broader than that of a Department of Geography in a University. We are to pro-

<sup>6</sup> The Degree of Bachelor of Education: Regulations adopted by the Faculty, October 15, 1923, AP. Accompanying documents indicate that this degree was aimed at women. Women (but not men) candidates for the B.Ed. remained excluded from undergraduate courses under the Trustees' interpretation of founder Jonas Clark's will.

mote and further in every way the study of geography, research in this field, the training of teachers, and the organization of the subject matter for greater effectiveness in education. (Atwood to Ellen Churchill Semple, June 3, 1924, AP)

Though Atwood supported graduate education for women, and encouraged some to contemplate doctoral study, his advice to them was cautious. Corresponding with Julia Shipman in 1924, he comments:

I have often thought . . . that I ought to remind you occasionally of the confidence that we have all held in the appropriateness of advising you to someday continue your work for a doctors degree. (Atwood to Julia Shipman, January 21, 1924, AP)

But in response to Carol Mason's (M.A. 1925) inquiry regarding doctoral work, he warned:

I have to be perfectly frank with you, and so I must tell you we have found difficulty placing them [i.e., women with doctorates] in positions such as they really should have. So, I should want you to keep a tight hold on your present position, coming with a leave of absence. Miss Baugh is doing that from the University of California at Los Angeles. . . . Most institutions that are engaging instructors with Doctor's degrees are demanding men . . . they thought [*sic*] a man ought to take charge of . . . outdoor expeditions. Of course, the women's colleges do not take this position, but there are so few openings that those of you who have them better keep pretty tight hold. I know you are quite capable of going right through all the work for the Doctor's degree. I have no intention of discouraging you, but I just wanted to tell you the situation in the profession which you must be conscious of if you are thinking of this move. I have talked this matter over frankly with other young women, and I should speak to my own daughter just as I have to you if she raised the question which you seem to be raising. So I trust you will understand the spirit in which I am writing.<sup>7</sup> (Atwood to Carol Y. Mason, January 30, 1929, AP)

In offering this advice, Atwood was reflecting (and accepting) the pattern that Rossiter (1982) has identified for the 1920s and 1930s, when the number of women with doctorates in the sciences was increasing but their prospects for academic appointments shrinking. They faced a situation in which the number of men with doctorates was expanding even more rapidly and when academia was striving to enhance its prestige by hiring bright young men. Simultaneously, male advantage was being reinforced by the introduction of tenure-track appointments and antinepotism policies. The scarcity of academic jobs in the Depression of the 1930s also made positions in women's colleges more acceptable to men. Rossiter defines it as a period of "growth, containment, and overqualification" (1982, 129) for women, when only the most exceptional could get a foot in the door of coeducational universities and even the women's colleges were favoring men for senior positions. The normal school was one of the few sites open to women faculty.

Both the normal schools and women's colleges were important sources of women students for Clark in the Atwood years. In their origins, the women differed somewhat from the men students. Virtually all the women were American, whereas some of the men had degrees from other countries. Though the men doctoral recipients had mostly earned their bachelor's degrees in universities, the women graduated from universities or women's colleges. Because women's colleges were important in New England, the women doctoral candidates were slightly more likely to have been undergraduates in the region than were the men. Most commonly, the women who ceased education with the M.A. came from normal schools (or teachers' colleges) (41 percent) rather than from universities (24 percent), women's colleges (18 percent), or other types of colleges (17 percent). They differed from the male M.A.s, of whom 34 percent came from teachers' colleges, 29

<sup>7</sup>Mason was teaching at Milwaukee-Downer, a women's college.

percent from universities, with the remainder almost equally divided between those with bachelors' from Clark or other U.S. colleges and foreign universities. About 35 percent of both the male and female M.A. recipients earned bachelor's degrees in New England/New York, indicating the regional importance of Clark for that level of graduate education (calculated from data in *The Clark Graduate School of Geography* 1946).

Where Clark was most accommodating to women was in its acceptance of intermittent study and transfer credits and in its limited residency requirement. As Ella Keene of Plymouth Normal (N.H.) reported, "I began searching for a place where I could work towards a bachelor's degree without taking a year's residence. The only institution that would accept me under those conditions was Clark University" (Dow 1988a, 66). Writing to Carol Mason, Atwood indicated that she could receive doctoral credit for work at Illinois, at Chicago, and for the Clark European field trip (though it was not planned as part of graduate training), reducing her requirements to a year of residency for course work, the thesis, and language requirements (Atwood to Carol Y. Mason, January 30, 1929, AP). That many women followed this model is evident from the curricula vitae in their dissertations.

Despite Clark's openness to women students, the faculty expressed conservative attitudes about the personal lives expected of and for them. As one student remarked: "I went over to Dr. Ekblaw . . . and I said, 'Well, I want to go on.' And he said, 'Well, all right. You can go on, but I want to warn you of something. If you do that, you probably will never get married'" (interview with 1930s doctoral graduate A). Writing in support of Wilma Fairchild's nomination for membership in the Association of American Geographers in 1947, Samuel Van Valkenburg noted: "At Clark we regarded her as one of our most promising students and we probably would have encouraged her to go on for a Ph.D. but for her marriage and subsequent work at

the American Geographical Society" (Samuel Van Valkenburg to Membership Committee, May 26, 1947). Almost all of the women receiving doctorates were, and remained, single.

### The Influences of Ellen Churchill Semple on the Environment of Clark

Although he accepted women students, Atwood hired only one woman for his faculty, Ellen Churchill Semple, who taught part time from 1921 until her death in 1932.<sup>8</sup> The pattern supports Rossiter's (1982) interpretation that only exceptional women could find a place on a university faculty. I have not found documentary evidence of his motives for hiring Semple, whom he had known for two decades since they had overlapped at the University of Chicago (Koelsch 1979). Long established as a distinguished scholar, and that year serving as president of the Association of American Geographers, she was presumably seen by Atwood as adding prestige to his fledgling program. Of most interest in the present context, however, is the nature of Atwood's association with Semple, since it may have influenced the ambience at Clark for women, and whether she supported women and/or provided a "role model."

Atwood and Semple appear to have had a cordial relationship. Her letters to him include assessments of current and potential students, professional gossip about the University of Chicago and job offers to other geographers, and her efforts to assist with the placement of Clark graduates. Atwood provided critical support in arranging for Ruth Baugh to help complete Semple's last book, and he also aided in the management of her familial affairs. Her appreciation is most evident in a letter

<sup>8</sup> A few women were hired for summer school teaching, among them Helen G. Thomas, Julia M. Shipman, Myrta L. McLellan, and Isabelle K. Hart (*Clark University Bulletin*, 1931).

regarding the book's dedication.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, Semple also acknowledged that she had been discriminated against financially at Clark in appending a codicil to her will revoking her bequest because she had been paid \$500 a year less than less-qualified male colleagues (Berman 1974). She assigns blame to the Trustees, though Atwood presumably had influence in setting salaries.

Semple supported Atwood's policies of fostering geographic education at Clark and highlighted the importance of bringing young women into teaching:

For the sake of geography, it is to me an abiding cause of regret that Clark College does not admit women. We need to train there a big body of women in undergraduate courses in geography, in order to equip them ably to teach the subject. Most of the women teachers who come to us from the schools for additional training in geography are too old for us to do much with them; and they are moreover too tired in those post-school afternoon hours to take in the new point of view in geography. Our women graduate students, devoting all their time to the work, are worth while; but not those visitants from the grade schools of Worcester whom I have met. We need to catch them young. (Ellen Churchill Semple to Atwood, April 19, 1923, quoted in Bushong 1975)

She valued what graduates of the women's colleges brought to their studies. "Miss Horn, the Vassar girl . . . is doing exceedingly well. . . . She is so quiet and unassuming that one would hardly suspect her ability; but that sound Vassar training counts in her as it does in all Vassar girls" (Ellen

Churchill Semple to Atwood, November 18, 1926, AP).<sup>10</sup> Available evidence identifies only one woman graduate student clearly recruited by Semple—Ruth Baugh, of whom she was highly supportive:

I have about persuaded a fine young woman, Ruth Baugh, instructor at the Southern Branch<sup>11</sup> to come to Clark next September for her masters degree in Geography. Her qualifications . . . are ample. . . . Her personality and good looks (praise be!) are all you could ask. . . . Now Miss Baugh will need all the financial help she can get. I told her I was sure you could give her a scholarship covering her tuition, and possibly a fellowship of larger amount. In your answer, will you please state whether a scholarship or fellowship is available. . . . She and I have already selected her subject for her masters' thesis. . . . Now may I ask you to telegraph your answer. (Ellen Churchill Semple to Atwood, June 2, 1925, AP)

Semple saw Baugh as "probably the strongest woman candidate for a degree that we have had" (Ellen Churchill Semple to Atwood, July 1, 1925, AP). In other letters, Semple is just as critical of women students as she is of men and recommends that some women candidates not be encouraged to continue beyond the master's. Her language incorporates stereotypical gender assessments of students' intellectual and personal qualities. One woman is described as "more emotional than intellectual," "sensitive," and "refined" (Ellen Churchill Semple to Atwood, March 22, 1928, AP).<sup>12</sup> A male student's potential is

<sup>9</sup> "You are a blessed lamb, Wallace Atwood, and I love you. I rejoice that you like the looks of *our* book; it is a dignified volume, worthy of you, its godfather. I wanted very much to make the dedication a closer reflection of my appreciation of you as a man and a scholar; but I feared it might sound superlative, and contented myself with an expression that even vindictive Barrows could hardly criticize" (Ellen Churchill Semple to Atwood, November 7, 1931, AP).

<sup>10</sup> Semple was a "Vassar girl."

<sup>11</sup> University of California, Southern Branch (subsequently University of California, Los Angeles).

<sup>12</sup> In earlier writing, Semple had identified "feminine" traits as beneficial for geographic research: "This subject is particularly suited to women because of their natural endowment . . . their power of observation, their patient perseverance in the collection of material, their intellectual humility" (quoted in Bushong 1975, 104).

questioned because “there was too much of the ‘eternal feminine’ about him, too little masculine brawn” (Ellen Churchill Semple to Atwood, May 4, 1924, AP).

Though she taught women students in her seminars at Clark and participated to some extent in field courses, Semple supervised only one woman’s dissertation, Ruth Baugh’s. Women whom I have interviewed who attended Clark in the mid-1930s (shortly after Semple’s death) did not speak of her association with Clark in their assessments of the institution. Her scholarly legacy was evident, however, in their dissertations, in which Semple’s anthropogeographic and historical visions are central. The question of whether Semple was a “role model” (and what that concept would constitute within the context of the period) is thus not simply resolved.

### How Women Came to Choose Clark

My interviews with women graduates and analysis of the changing composition of the student body suggest several influences on their enrollment at Clark, including advice from mentors and perceptions of other options. One woman, who had already earned a master’s in education with a strong geography component, on contemplating going to Clark for her doctorate in the 1930s, was advised by her undergraduate mentor (a Clark graduate) not to tell the faculty she was aiming for a doctorate:

He said, ‘geographers don’t favor women in the graduate field very much . . . but it won’t hurt you a bit just to work for a master’s degree. . . . You could get a doctor’s degree if you wanted to, but they’re kind of prejudiced against women. . . . When you go back there, don’t tell them what you want to do, let them tell you what they want you to do.’ (interview with 1930s doctoral graduate B)

She followed his advice, but then, near the end of a long master’s oral exam, she reflected:

Well, they’ve been asking me questions quite a while, and the shadows are getting longer . . . and they asked me every conceivable thing. And then they excused you [*sic*]. And when I came back in, they said ‘you have done very well, and you’re acceptable as a Ph.D. [candidate].’ (interview with 1930s doctoral graduate B)

Two decades later another woman received similar advice. After years of intermittent study at Chicago and Wisconsin, she tried to set up a Ph.D. program with Colby at Chicago:

But when it came right down to it, he kind of stalled on it. Then . . . I knew it would have taken a long time and a lot of money to ever get a degree from Chicago. . . . At that time, Wisconsin just wasn’t taking women. (interview with 1950s doctoral graduate A)

She obtained a one-year scholarship at Clark, helped by a Clark history graduate who was president of the liberal arts college where she was teaching. She followed advice given to her by J. Russell Whittaker: “Don’t say anything about working for a degree or anything. He told me not to mention that” (interview with 1950s doctoral graduate A).

It is not surprising that a number of women chose Clark because of their connections with Clark graduates. This pattern helped to broaden the pool of women beyond the New England region, given the wide dispersal of Clark graduates. Some networks (particularly the one between Clark and Illinois State Normal University) directed a number of women to Clark.<sup>13</sup> A 1930s master’s graduate mentioned that one of her undergraduate teachers in Detroit was a Clark graduate and helped her to obtain a partial scholarship. She had also enjoyed Van Valkenburg’s teaching in Detroit, where he held a position briefly

<sup>13</sup> Seven Clark women M.A.s and two women Ph.D.s between 1921 and 1946 earned their bachelors’ degrees at Illinois State Normal University. Robert G. Buzzard of ISNU, later president of Eastern Illinois, Ph.D. Clark 1925, was an important mentor.

before coming to Clark. Two M.A.s of the 1940s spoke of the influence of their teachers who were Clark graduates:

So I asked [him], if there was any way I could keep going to school a little longer, not to have to graduate and start teaching in west Texas, which is where the jobs were. And he said, "Yes, maybe I could get you a scholarship to Clark." So he did. He had ties to Clark. (interview with 1940s master's graduate A)

The second mentioned a woman faculty member in a small Great Plains college who told her Atwood and Van Valkenburg were favorable to women and that Dr. Atwood was her personal friend. "She wrote to him and he invited me to work on my master's there, and gave me some kind of fellowship. . . . They aren't the snobbish Berkeley crowd or the Chicago crowd . . . they wouldn't take women" (interview with 1940s master's graduate B).

The importance of personal ties continued beyond the Atwood period. "My choice of geography . . . was made rather haphazardly in 1948. My undergraduate professor, Verna B. Flanders suggested I apply to Clark where she had once taken some summer courses," wrote Mildred Berman (1984, 61). A 1960s doctoral graduate mentioned the influence of her instructor at a Massachusetts teachers' college:

He kind of turned me on intellectually . . . and in the senior year, he inquired of a number of us . . . whether we might be interested in going to graduate school. And he had been a Clark graduate and maintained a lot of ties to Clark. . . . And I wasn't sure that was what I wanted to do, but I applied anyway. (interview with 1960s doctoral graduate)

Since a wide range of institutions is represented in the undergraduate degrees of women attending Clark, some likely came without personal ties. But it was only when interviewing the 1970s students that I heard of choices being made without such references. Indeed, one woman had virtually decided to accept an offer elsewhere

when a phone call came from Clark. As a feminist, she liked the fact that Semple had been at Clark. Together with the impact of the call,<sup>14</sup> this swayed her choice.

From the 1920s to 1950s, women's decisions to seek graduate education also reflected important contextual conditions. From the time normal schools were founded in the nineteenth century to prepare teachers for public (and especially rural) schools,<sup>15</sup> usually in short (up to two years) training programs, educational leaders had worked to "professionalize" and upgrade teacher training institutions. One motivation was to attract men into teaching, which had become highly feminized by the late nineteenth century. Urbanization and the expansion of high school education also increased the demand for college-level preparation for teachers and for higher qualifications for administrators and teacher-training faculty. Such factors lay behind the transformation of normal schools to degree-granting state teachers' colleges, then their elevation into state colleges and eventually, by the 1950s and 1960s, into state universities (Clifford 1989; Herbst 1989; Johnson 1989). Pressures for upgrading were pronounced in the 1920s and 1930s, though the process was protracted.<sup>16</sup> Ella Keene noted that Keene Normal School became Keene State College in 1940, but was still struggling to have its geography courses recognized by the University of New Hampshire several years later (Dow 1988a). Berman (1988) records the transformation of Salem Normal School to Salem Teachers College

<sup>14</sup> The call came from the secretary to director Saul Cohen (interview with 1980s doctoral graduate).

<sup>15</sup> Initiated in Massachusetts in the 1830s, they had become important across the country by the end of the century. Massachusetts alone had nine normal schools by 1896 (Berman 1988).

<sup>16</sup> Expectations of doctoral credentials for university employment were being established by the early years of the century (Dunbar 1981).

in 1932 and to Salem State College in the 1960s.

As already noted, many of the women who came to Clark for master's degrees (and some of the doctoral graduates also) got their start in normal schools of New England; their decisions to continue their education reflected not only personal interests but also pressures to raise their qualifications as a means of keeping or advancing their employment in higher education. Clark provided one of the few regional options, since as late as the 1960s the state universities offered little geography (Dow 1988b, 1988c) and geography in the Ivy League institutions was persistently weak or troubled (Glick 1988; Martin 1988). Then, too, Ivy League education schools had status ambitions that led them to prefer male students (Clifford and Guthrie 1988). It is also possible (though I have not found reports to this effect) that continuing financial stresses at Clark (Koelsch 1987) made the institution willing to accept a range of students, including women. A combination of contextual conditions thus influenced enrollment at Clark by women from teacher education institutions in New England and elsewhere.

The tight and narrow job market in the 1930s induced some women to attend graduate school for lack of other options. "Well, I couldn't get a job in 1932 after I received my master's degree, and Dad said, keep on going," one reported (interview with 1930s doctoral graduate A). Another, teaching in the normal school in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, reported that in 1929, her last year there, she was being paid in scrip, and that no out-of-state faculty were being retained. She returned to Illinois State Normal to teach summer school and while there was advised to go back for a doctorate at Clark (interview with 1930s doctoral graduate B). Highlighting personal goals and the options of her era, another said she went on partly because she desired further education, but also because she wanted to get into research and writing, not to be a teacher or a nurse: "when I was growing up, they used

to say teaching and nursing were the two women's professions, and I didn't like either one!" (interview with 1930s master's graduate).

The women students of the 1940s and 1950s were more diverse than their predecessors. While some continued to be faculty from the teachers' colleges, increasing numbers of women came from abroad. Without them, the representation of women at Clark would have been much reduced, especially in the 1950s. Of the 69 women students identified in issues of *The Monadnock* between 1950 and 1959, 31 came from outside the United States, mostly from Asia, with a few from Europe, Canada, and Latin America (Fig. 2). By this time, the dispersal of Clark graduates, and "Dr. Van's" international connections, made Clark visible on the world scene.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the American women who had come through the normal schools were reaching retirement age and were being replaced by male faculty. For example, 6 of the 12 appointees (and the 2 longest serving) at Salem Normal School and 2 of the 5 appointed to Salem Teachers College before 1955 were women. The 9 appointed between 1955 and 1969 were men (Berman 1988). The post-World War II social climate also disproportionately deterred American women from professional education and promoted domesticity. *The Monadnock* in 1950 reports a number of the male students as married men with children. By 1956, wives of married students had established a weekly meeting "to pass the time in chatting, and indulging in such useful tasks as mending hubby's socks, sewing, knitting, etc." (*The Monadnock*, 1956, 6).

In the post-World War II years, changes in educational funding had gender implica-

<sup>17</sup> One reviewer noted that many of these students were financed by their governments. This is indirectly an interesting comment on attitudes toward American and women's higher education outside the United States at this time.



**Figure 2.** Graduate School of Geography faculty and students, December 1951. Two of the women students are faculty on leave from teachers colleges and four are from abroad (England, France, India, and Thailand). Six men students are missing in the photograph. Photo courtesy of John Pawling.

tions. At first, support for veterans facilitated men's education more than women's. Then, in the 1960s, new federal programs funded graduate school fellowships and the further education of teachers and college faculty. Mildred Berman writes that a National Science Foundation Faculty Fellowship enabled her to enroll as a doctoral candidate at Clark in 1961–62, to complete the residency requirements, and to begin dissertation research in Israel (Berman 1984). Ironically, as such funding became available, the social pressures discouraging women's graduate education continued, and men's interest in these awards increased the competition for women. Rossiter (1995) has documented the male bias in the granting of federal awards, especially from the National Science Foundation. At a time when Saul Cohen was bringing federal funds into Clark to revitalize the institution, as well as to support training of African Americans

(Koelsch 1987), most of the students recruited, including those participating in National Defense Education Act year-long and summer institutes, were men. The combined effects of these contextual changes are especially noticeable in the changing proportion of women among Clark M.A. recipients. Whereas they had made up approximately half of the M.A. graduates up to 1945, by the 1960s they accounted for little more than 10 percent of them.

Programmatic changes in the mid-1960s eliminated the conditions that had been attractive to the earlier women: residency requirements were increased to two years for the M.A. and two years for the Ph.D., except for students with Clark M.A.s, who were required to have only one additional year of residency. Greater specialization was instituted in doctoral course work (Saul B. Cohen, memo, November 28, 1966; Saul B. Cohen, Statement of

Purpose, n.d., Saul B. Cohen Papers). A sustained increase in the proportional representation of women in the student body at Clark did not occur until the mid-1970s, influenced not only by the climate of the women's movement, which encouraged women to pursue further education and careers, but also, I suggest, by the tightening of the academic job market and cuts in federally funded fellowships, which brought about a drop in the total number of students and made graduate education less attractive to men. The impact of these funding cuts on enrollment at Clark are noted in the 1973 issue of *The Monadnock*. During this period, the changes in gender composition among graduate students in geography were evident not only at Clark but also nationally.<sup>18</sup>

### Experiencing Clark

The women's accounts of student life highlight the importance of experiential learning and social relationships in their evaluations of graduate education at Clark. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Fall field camp was especially memorable:

They had three weeks in the field then . . . when we worked in the Connecticut Valley. Well, life began to open up then . . . the

<sup>18</sup> My research indicates that withdrawal of men from student membership of the Association of American Geographers was massive between 1973 and 1978, at a time when the number of women students was increasing. The proportional growth in women's representation owed much to men's "disappearance" in this period. It was suggested to me by a reviewer that women students at Clark made efforts to recruit other women and that departmental funding was provided to support this project. I attempted to verify this by contacting ten women students who were at Clark in the early to mid-1970s, but none of the six who responded could recall such efforts. Saul Cohen thinks some travel funds were provided for this purpose, but that making Clark receptive to women students through the recruiting network was more important (pers. comm., 20 August 1997).

weather was glorious, the country was beautiful, the work we were doing was *fascinating* to me because it was connected . . . [physiography, economics, human settlement, and development] all these things came together, which was the thing that had given me the excitement about geography in the first place. (interview with 1930s master's graduate)

I wish there were more field camps. That is when we got to know our fellow students . . . and, of course, Dr. Van would come out when he'd think there'd be a temperature inversion, and get you up at two in the morning, swinging these thermometers [*sic*]. Oh, that was wonderful! (interview with 1940s master's graduate C)

The field course also served an important bonding function: "and they played tricks on each other, jokes and things. And actually, I think there was a lot of affection on the part of the faculty for the students" (interview with 1950s doctoral graduate B).

Several women mentioned the camaraderie of the graduate student workroom, the social life with fellow students, the close relationships with faculty, and periodic visits to faculty homes. One contrasted Clark in the early 1940s with Wisconsin, which she subsequently attended:

And I didn't feel as welcome, and I didn't feel enfolded. At Clark we had the workroom where all the students were together. And we were very congenial and supportive of each other. And I didn't feel that at Wisconsin. We were all in little cubicles working away and competing. (interview with 1950s doctoral graduate B)

These interpretations offer the positive side of a context that other historians of Clark have viewed critically for its inbreeding and old-fashioned geography (Koelsch 1988; Prunty 1979). The women were not simply appreciative of the "family" atmosphere, however. They found the international student presence enriching and fun, and they organized events to take advantage of the diversity.

Nevertheless, the picture is not one of constant congeniality, especially in the post-World War II years, when both the faculty and the student body changed in character. Mildred Berman (1984, 62) thought that "the egalitarian structure and spirit of the field camp rapidly dissipated in the more formal aura of the classroom, where male dominance was quickly established. . . . Most women students said nothing in class." By the late 1940s and into the 1950s, women's reports are equivocal. While their accounts may reflect generational differences in perceptions, Clark had become less harmonious, with struggles over updating the curriculum, new paradigms, and changing leadership that lasted into the mid-1960s (Koelsch 1988). "Dr. Van" remained a favorite figure with the women, as he had been since the 1930s: "He was a much more approachable person. He was around there every morning for people who came early . . . and you could have a little chat with him" (interview with 1950s doctoral graduate A). Accounts of Raymond Murphy's support are mixed. One woman reported that he delayed in dealing with her thesis, but that "Dr. Van" stepped in to move it along in his absence. A 1960s graduate said "Murphy was gung-ho for women," but qualified her assessment: "at the time I thought he was doing me favors . . . that I was being nurtured by him. Twenty years later . . . I looked at it a little differently. . . . I think he got a lot more out of the women students that he mentored." She described Bill Birch, a British geographer on the faculty for a short period, as much more difficult: "We compared notes, he never gave a woman an A . . . he just gave B++" (interview with 1960s doctoral graduate).

Though no women were appointed to the faculty after Semple until the 1970s and 1980s,<sup>19</sup> over the years women found

<sup>19</sup>Ann Buttimer came as a postdoctoral fellow in 1970, then was appointed assistant professor in 1971; Susan Hanson was appointed assistant professor in 1981, Jacque Emel in 1984, and Dianne Rocheleau in 1989 (pers. comms.).

support from other women students, women family members, women's organizations, and connections at the institutions where they worked. This "female bias" in support is clear in the acknowledgments within the dissertations, especially in the 1930s and 1940s, which mention other women's encouragement and help with funding, field work, transportation, compilation of data, photography, and preparation of the manuscript (Allen 1937; Danklefsen 1952; Hanlon 1953; Lemaire 1935; Mason 1936; Moyer 1955; Roberts 1938; Whittemore 1936; Zeller 1940).

Several women's dissertations of the 1930s and 1940s written in anthropogeographic and historical paradigms might surprise contemporary readers in their discussions of women's roles and of ethnic diversity. They describe domestic and income-producing work by women, men, and children (including ethnic differences) (Anderson 1932; Clune 1922; Lemaire 1935; Roberts 1938); mention child care (Clune 1922); deal with interior spaces of the home (Roberts 1938; Lemaire 1935), in the process challenging stereotypes about minorities (Anderson 1932; Roberts 1938); and mention changing patterns of food consumption and community institutions such as libraries, churches, and schools (Roberts 1938). As Clark modernized to embrace urban, economic, spatial geography in the 1950s, women disappear from the content of the dissertations, only reappearing in the feminist work of the 1980s.

### Life After Clark

Because this article emphasizes the Clark experience, I will only briefly address women's subsequent careers, focusing on the 1921–46 period for which detailed data are available. The distinctions between men and women graduates are clear. Whereas men with doctorates obtained university positions, the women worked in normal schools, teachers' colleges, or women's colleges (Table 2). Since university appointments were secured through personal referrals rather than advertisements,

**Table 2**  
Employment of Clark Ph.D.s and M.A.s (1921–1945) as of 1946

Place of Employment	Males				Females			
	Ph.D.		M.A.		Ph.D.		M.A.	
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Universities	32	(47.8)	10	(14.5)	3	(3.1)	—	(0)
State teachers colleges/ Normal schools	18	(17.9)	11	(15.9)	5	(38.5)	11	(14.1)
Other colleges	9	(13.4)	4	(5.8)	1	(7.7)	4	(5.1)
Government (including military)	9	(13.4)	16	(23.2)	—	(0)	7	(9.0)
Business	1	(1.5)	15	(7.2)	—	(0)	2	(2.6)
High school	1	(1.5)	9	(13.0)	1	(7.7)	17	(21.8)
Other	2	(3.0)	—	(0)	1	(7.7)	—	(0)
Deceased	1	(1.5)	3	(4.3)	1	(7.7)	2	(2.6)
Not employed (including retired)	—	(0)	2	(2.9)	1	(7.7)	—	(0)
No information	—	(0)	9	(13.0)	—	(0)	35	(44.9)
Total	67	(100)	69	(100)	13	(100)	78	(100)

Source: Calculated from Atwood, n.d.

the role of Clark faculty in suggesting candidates, as well as the biases of the hiring institutions, are involved.<sup>20</sup> Tellingly, Clark hired its own male graduates, but not its female ones. Among master's graduates, some men secured university positions, but no women did. Slightly over half the women can be identified only by city of residence, rather than position, compared with only about 10 percent of the men. About equal proportions of men and women with master's degrees were working in normal schools, but women were much more likely than men to be teaching high school.

The perceptions of those teaching in the normal schools (and of those wishing to break out of normal school employment) identified problems that some saw as worse for women than for men: poor salaries and conditions, few resources, heavy teaching loads, and multiple ancillary duties (Julia Shipman to Atwood, February 2, 1926, May 12, 1929, November 15, 1929; Lillian Girard to Atwood, May 20, 1927; Mabel C.

<sup>20</sup> An array of letters between the women and Atwood and between Atwood and Semple support this interpretation.

Stark to D. Ridgely, October 3, 1923; Moina Prator to Atwood, January 24, 1929; all in AP). Nevertheless, many Clark women had substantial accomplishments and satisfying lives, gaining professional and community recognition, traveling extensively, holding international assignments, and writing articles and other publications. For example, Wilma Fairchild (M.A. 1937) was long-time editor of the *Geographical Review* and 1964 recipient of an AAG Meritorious Contribution Award (James and Martin 1978); Katheryne Whittemore (Ph.D. 1936) was president of the National Council for Geographic Education in 1946, and Ina Cullom Robertson (M.A. 1924) assumed that position in 1957 (Vining 1990); Ruth Baugh (Ph.D. 1929) was president of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers (Trussell 1987); Agnes Allen (Ph.D. 1937) received the highest award that can be conferred on a nongovernment employee from the U.S. Department of the Interior for her educational work (Van Otten 1996). For some, Clark remained an important part of their professional lives, with the Clark network and connection facilitating employ-

ment opportunities. For others, *Economic Geography* under Ekblaw's editorship was an outlet for their writing (Zelinsky, Monk, and Hanson 1982). Others published regularly in educational outlets.

### Clark as Hearth and Home

From the 1920s to the 1970s, the Graduate School of Geography at Clark stands out among U.S. universities for its absolute and relative importance in educating women geographers. Its significance was regional and national, especially in relation to faculty in teacher education institutions, and also international. Women came to Clark with the encouragement and support of mentors who were Clark alumni, drawing on their advice to strategize how to gain admission and financial aid. They came because of their personal interest in geography but also to sustain and advance their careers as changing conditions in higher education demanded higher credentials. In the 1920s and 1930s especially, they found an environment that validated geographic education and an intimate institutional climate that was congenial. At all times, there were a number of women in the program (unlike the potential isolation at most other institutions), and the women drew on each other, as well as other women in their circles, for assistance in their work. In the 1950s and 1960s, changes in gender expectations in U.S. society, and developments in higher education and in geography nationally and at Clark, disrupted the earlier patterns. Women from abroad were crucial in sustaining the female presence at Clark, and American women began to be identified as "wives" supporting the increasingly male student body.

Even though Clark was "welcoming," when the women graduated they found restricted opportunities. Occupational segregation was quite evident. Realistically, women geographers, even those with doctorates, could aspire to positions in teacher education institutions, the few women's colleges, high schools, or outside academe-

nia.<sup>21</sup> University positions were almost exclusively open to men. Elsewhere (Rugg 1981), the Midwest has been identified as the "hearthland" (in the sense of source and place of employment) of American academic geography, especially in relation to doctoral departments. When viewed from the perspective of women geographers, however, Clark emerges as the originating "hearthland" and might also be characterized as their "home"—accommodating and welcoming, though not without periodic tensions, highlighting the importance of institutional climate as a factor in the education of women in the profession.

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<sup>21</sup> Limited space in this article has precluded exploration of the careers some Clark women forged outside academia, especially in publishing and government.

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