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Place and Gender

Applying Gender Theory to the Documentation and Management of Cultural Landscapes

Diversity—what it means and how it applies to the National Park Service —was discussed at the recent Mosaic in Motion conference held in Santa Fe, New Mexico.[1] While the conference focused on cultural or ethnic diversity, participants acknowledged that there are many diversity factors, including class, gender, religion, and disability, and a number of ways to think about diversity, for example, in terms of different kinds of people, different kinds of opportunities, and different kinds of resources.

The focus of this paper is gender—as one aspect of diversity—and thinking about gender in relation to the preservation and interpretation of cultural landscapes. My purpose here is to introduce some ideas that may help balance our understanding and interpretation of cultural landscapes and their history. Cultural landscapes are developed by, and associated with, diverse types of people, researchers, and managers. Interpreters at historic areas can encourage greater awareness of diversity by enhancing existing efforts to recognize, document, and interpret diversity.

Gender as a Social Construction

Gender is determined by how social and cultural roles are defined and learned; gender is related to but not determined by biology. Gender behavior is learned and performed on a daily basis, and differs from culture to culture. Gender behavior includes language—both verbal and body language—and includes social, family, and work roles. Standards of appropriate gender behavior evolve through time, and can be changed consciously—what is "normal" according to past behavior standards does not have to be accepted as universal or always true.

For example, the association between the natural landscape and "femaleness" is an association of Western culture, and does not necessarily hold true in other cultures. In some non-Western cultures, men may be associated with nature, all humans may or may not be associated with nature, other criteria such as wild versus tame are associated with gender, or no distinction is made between nature and culture at all.[2]

Gender and Women's History?

Over the last few decades, there has been substantial activity in the area of women's history within the National Park Service. A number of places significant in women's history have been included on the National Register, some listed as National Historic Landmarks. The National Park Service has co-sponsored three national conferences on Women and Historic Preservation.[3] Findings from the vast amount of research in women's history have been incorporated into interpretation programs and materials.

National Park Service publications in women's history include *Reclaiming the Past: Landmarks of Women's History,* an outcome of the 1989 National Historic Landmark theme study to identify additional places important to women; *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History,* which provides descriptions of many women's contributions to the National Park Service; "Beyond John Wayne: Using Historic Sites to Interpret Western Women's History," an article that promotes the use of historic sites and material culture in interpreting western women's history; several issues of *CRM* that show the diversity of women's history research relating to NPS units; and a brochure outlining how women's history research can be used in interpretive programs.[4]

Women's history focuses on including women's experiences and contributions, making women's roles visible within interpretive programs, and preserving places special for women. Some of these efforts have included women within existing historical themes and stories, and some have questioned the way women and gender roles have been represented. Gender can be approached in various ways in different kinds of studies.[5] In some discussions of gender, women

remain the primary research focus in order to balance the representation of both genders.

For instance, in the field of geography, patterns of women's work throughout a region or worldwide have been studied in order to include women, to represent women more accurately, and to have the information available with which gender comparisons can be made.[6] Much of women's history research would fit into this approach. Other discussions of gender focus on gender roles, and how social, family, and work roles differ between women and men. And yet others compare differences among women with differences among men. Each of these approaches will be discussed here, in relation to cultural landscapes.

Thus, focusing on gender usually includes both men and women, and involves asking questions such as how gender identities have influenced social relationships, community actions, historical trends, and the evolution of landscapes at different times in history. Women are integrated into the overall story, not included as an "add-on," and our understanding of history may change.

Gender Balances Gender Representation

In this approach, women's stories and voices are included and historical inaccuracies and stereotypes are corrected. For example, at Tumacacori National Historical Park in southern Arizona, where the National Park Service preserves and interprets life at three historic Spanish missions, Hispanic and Native American women were an important part of the mission community. The park continues to incorporate more information on Native American and Hispanic women in their interpretive programs[7] as part of the overall effort to more accurately represent cultural and gender diversity.

Traditional western history includes three stereotypes of Anglo-American women—the refined lady, the long-suffering wife, and the prostitute. In reality, women homesteaders do not fit these stereotypes.[8] An example is Emma Erickson, of Faraway Ranch at Chiricahua National Monument. Emma, and her daughter Lillian, were among a number of women who worked homesteads and ranches—often by themselves—in the southern Arizona area.[9] Using sources such as diaries and letters that show how these women defined themselves, and how they described their own experience, we can include them accurately in the picture.

Another stereotype about Anglo-American women in the West is that they wanted to remake their eastern domestic environments and domesticate the wilderness, and that they felt intimidated by the open spaces of the West. Research has found that many women—farmers, ranchers, artists, and tourists—found the vast open spaces liberating, and celebrated them rather than tried to change them.[10] Two well-known examples are writer Mary Austin and artist Georgia O'Keeffe.

This kind of research can be—and has been in a number of parks—applied to the inclusion of the stories of women who explored and enjoyed the undeveloped landscape and the interpretation of the meanings and symbolism of these landscapes for different kinds of women. With the incorporation of this kind of research, gender diversity is more accurately represented.

Gender Explores Gender Roles

This approach moves further into gender analysis, and can look at how different places and types of work can be gendered. "Gendered" means that places or types of work are associated with men or women, through design, use, or behavior. For example, in traditional Western culture, the private realms of the home, childcare, the family, and community volunteer work have been associated with women, and the public realms of paid labor, business, and politics have been associated with men.

A southwestern cultural landscape example that somewhat reverses these traditional associations is the comparison of the spatial organization of nuns' living and working areas within the Sisters of Loretto religious community in Bernalillo, New Mexico, compared with the spatial organization of the adjacent Christian Brothers' living and working areas.[11] Both the nuns and the brothers owned tracts of land containing church and school compounds, agricultural fields, and orchards, and they both worked the fields. The nuns lived within the school and church compound, so their residence was more public, visible, and accessible.

In comparison, the brothers' residence was tucked back in the orchard area, separated from their church and school. According to author Lisa Nicholas, the more public residences of the nuns relates to gendered work roles. The nuns were expected to be available to be of service at any hour—they did not have the more private "monastic retreat" that the brothers did—and cultural norms of the day required women to be

This NPS training program at the Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site in Arizona addressed gender as one aspect of diversity. Photo by the author.

more protected and less isolated. While this example reverses the male-public and female-private associations, Nicholas' research indicates that the spatial organization of these landscapes was still gendered.

In Western culture, the distinction between "productive" and "reproductive" labor is often gendered. "Productive" labor has traditionally been defined as paid labor within commercial agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and so on; "reproductive" labor has traditionally been defined as often unpaid work in raising children, managing households, and community volunteer work. In addition to preserving material results of "productive" labor, such as buildings and bridges, we can also ask about the processes and support services involved in making this work possible. We can ask: Where were the women and children? Where were the homes, the gardens, the laundries, and the community social places?

Forts and other military sites tend to be gendered landscapes because they were planned and used primarily by men, and they need to be interpreted as such. However, by documenting, preserving and interpreting the places where women lived and worked, e.g., laundries and married officers' quarters, we can ensure that the women who were involved at these sites are included, and that all "reproductive" labor is included and represented. This is occurring at a number of forts preserved within the national park system. With this information on women's involvement and on "reproductive" labor, gender roles can be compared more effectively.

Back at Tumacacori, we can study historic and contemporary garden spaces through a "gender lens" by including questions that address potential gender roles and relationships.[12] For example, who historically did the gardening and cared for the plants? Were gardens historically associated with women or men? What did the plants and/or garden design mean to the garden designers and users of the plants? Many gardens developed by women who moved north into what is now the United States from Mexico are characteristic of Spanish/Moorish gardens—walled gardens divided into four quadrants, with a central water feature and containing a variety of fruit trees, flowers, and herbs.

Raquel Rubio-Goldsmith has described these gardens as being "clearly positioned within the domain of women," and states that the image of the garden served "as both a female domain and a symbol of civilization." Similar to other European women settlers, Hispanic women have been associated with maintaining the moral order and civilizing the wilderness, and with the domestic sphere, kitchen gardens, and cooking. Plants from the walled gardens were used by rezadores or prayer women. Men might build the garden shrines, but for the most part the women cared for them.[13]

Staff from the Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW) at the University of Arizona are currently working on a bilingual interpretive brochure for the courtyard garden at Tumacacori National Historical Park. The brochure will address the use of plants by Hispanic and Native American women, for example, women healers (curanderas), and a number of plants shown to be associated with women will be introduced within the courtyard garden. According to SIROW researcher Penny Waterstone, plants important to women for medicinal use historically and today—such as creosote and ephedra or Mormon tea—have not been documented so far by historians, but are now acknowledged as culturally-important plants. Waterstone maintains that the peaceful courtyard garden setting provides an opportunity to interpret "...both the mundane and the spiritual lives of ordinary and prominent people: men, women, children, natives, ...Europeans ...mixed families, and later Anglo-American settlers."[14]

Differences Among Women and Men

This approach more realistically addresses complexities of who people are and the different factors that relate to how and why people influence the development of cultural landscapes. We all have many different aspects of identity, and we all play multiple roles. While in previous centuries

all women and men did not fit traditional gender roles and identities, this is definitely less so today. We can address the complexities of diversity by looking at the historical development of landscapes and at how they are developed and used today and by considering gender along with other relevant categories of diversity, such as class and ethnicity.

Again using Tumacacori as the example, questions using this approach might include: How are people's experiences of gardens similar or different across gender, culture, and age? Do Hispanic and Anglo women's gardens have a similar function—as a walled oasis against the wilderness and a personal refuge—but have different forms—perhaps rows of flowers in planting beds in some and more container planting in others? Do outdoor spaces historically designed by men (perhaps orchards and fields, irrigation systems) differ by culture—between Hispanic, Native American, and Anglo men? Were women sometimes involved in places and work usually associated with men, and were men sometimes involved in places and work usually associated with women?

Gender is One of Many Diversity Factors

Considering gender as one of many diversity factors is an important element in the documentation and management of cultural landscapes. We can focus on one diversity factor, like gender, but we need to acknowledge the possible influence of others. As mentioned by one of the Mosaic conference speakers, the National Park Service must evolve with history and not be afraid to tell the whole story[15]—we must evolve with our changing understanding of history.

Notes

1 "A Mosaic in Motion 2000, The National Park Service, Embracing and Engaging All People," November 8-12, 2000, at the College of Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico, sponsored by the National Parks and Conservation Association and the National Park Service.

2 As described in Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern, *Nature, Gender and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

3 The most recent "Women and Historic Preservation" Conference was held at The George Washington University at Mount Vernon College, Washington, DC, in May 2000.

4 Page Putnam Miller, ed., *Reclaiming the Past: Landmarks of Women's History* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992); Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Heather Huyck, "Beyond John Wayne: Using Historic Sites to Interpret Western Women's History" in Lillian Schlissel, Vicki L. Ruiz, and Janice Monk, eds., *Western Women: Their Land, Their Lives* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 303-329; the special issues of *CRM* devoted to women's history, Volume 20:3 (1997) and Volume 21:11 (1998); and the brochure entitled *Exploring a Common Past: Interpreting Women's History in the National Park Service,* National Park Service, 1996.

5 The discussion of different approaches to gender studies is included in *Women and Geography Study Group* of the Royal Geographical Society, with the Institute of British Geographers, *Feminist Geographies: Explorations in Diversity and Difference* (Harlow, England: Longman, 1997), and Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

6 *Women and Geography Study Group,* pp. 56-65.

7 Staff at Tumacacori National Historical Park, personal communications, 1999-2000.

8 Susan Armitage, "Through Women's Eyes: A New View of the West," in Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, eds., *The Women's West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 9-18.

9 Betty Leavengood, *Faraway Ranch, Chiricahua National Monument* (Tucson, Arizona: Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, 1995).

10 Vera Norwood, "Women's Place: Continuity and Change in Response to Western Landscapes," in Lillian Schlissel, Vicki L. Ruiz, and Janice Monk, eds., *Western Women: Their Land, Their Lives.* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 155-181.

11 Lisa Nicholas, "Working in the Fields of the Lord: The Historic and Enduring Influence of the Sisters of Loretto on the Landscape of Bernalillo, New Mexico," unpublished Master's thesis, University of New Mexico, 2000.

12 Janice Monk, "Gender Issues in Landscape Research", presentation given at the "Different Voices, Different Visions: Identification and Analysis of Cultural Landscapes" training course, held at Tumacacori National Historical Park and Tubac Presidio State Historical Park, Arizona, September 1998.

13 Raquel Rubio-Goldsmith, "Civilization, Barbarism, and Norteña Gardens," in Susan Hardy Aiken, et al, eds., *Making Worlds: Gender, Metaphor, Materiality* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998): 274-287.

14 Penny Waterstone, personal communication, December 1, 2000.

15 Jerry Belson, Southeast Regional Director, presentation given at Mosaic in Motion conference.

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