

# Engendered and Feminist Archaeologies of the Recent and Documented Pasts

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**Abstract** Engendered and feminist archaeologies in historical archaeology have developed in complementary ways to those in nonhistorical archaeologies but with distinct methodological issues and sources of data. This article discusses the development of engendered and feminist archaeologies that use textual sources, the continuing themes that characterize this body of work, and the state of the field today. The article concludes with a discussion of future directions for practitioners to pursue.

**Keywords** Historical archaeology · Gender · Feminism · Social identity

## Introduction

In 1984 Margaret Conkey and Janet Spector, inspired by the growing influence of feminist thought in the social sciences, first called for archaeologists to recognize the sexless nature of their considerations of the past. Now, over 20 years later, gender, and increasingly sex and sexuality, are important sites of intellectual engagement in the discipline. In addition, in a post-Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), postmodern world, feminist thought—though not always acknowledged—has had profound impact on the practice and presentation of archaeology. Nowhere in the discipline are these influences more visible than in historical archaeology.

Engendered work in historical archaeology serves one or more of the following agendas: The first is a drive to understand how gender roles in modern society have come to be through an understanding of how they have been dynamically negotiated in the recent past. This particular body of work holds at its core a feminist agenda of challenging sexism and inequality. The second, closely entwined with the first, is an effort to demonstrate the fluid nature of gender ideologies and roles and to challenge notions of normative family or household structure. A third agenda focuses on how to make interpretations of the past

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more accessible to a broad range of scholars from other disciplines and to the public, and to experiment with archaeological presentations that decenter archaeological authority in productive ways.

While much of engendered historical archaeology does benefit from a feminist sensibility, in no way is engendered historical archaeology merely informed by feminist theorizing. Instead, gender is approached from a range of theoretical perspectives, including Marxism and critical theory (e.g., Little, 1994a; Scott, 1994), practice theories (e.g., DeCunzo, 1995; Martinez, 1998; Wilkie, 2000a), critical race theory (e.g., Franklin, 2001), performance theory (Joyce, 2000a,b; Meskell and Joyce, 2003), and queer theory (e.g., Casella, 2000a; Gilchrist, 2000a; Voss, 2000a) among others. Gender is regularly approached from multiple archaeological scales ranging from households (e.g., Kruczek-Aaron, 2002; Lawrence, 1999; Pappas, 2004) to community organizations (e.g., DeCunzo, 1995; Jackson, 1994; Larsen, 1994) to cities and larger social landscapes (e.g., Deagan, 1983; Purser, 1991; Rothschild, 2003). The field has been enriched by the multitude of practices and theories, which for the most part coexist peacefully in the discipline.

In this article, we introduce the reader to the major agendas and themes that have shaped engendered historical archaeology over the last two decades. We outline the research themes and intellectual and methodological developments that have marked historical archaeologies of sex and gender since the 1980s, when feminism was introduced to the field. We review how historical archaeologies of sex and gender have been shaped by theoretical shifts in both feminist and archaeological thought. We then present a survey of the important foci of sex and gender research being undertaken in the field today and present our sense of where this field is—and should be—going. The majority of the works we discuss are historical archaeologies focused on the sites created in the recent past (sites no more than 500 years old). Although we have defined historical archaeology in broad terms, the extant literature on gender is largely drawn from North American historic sites. We limit our consideration to the research of archaeologists working in an anthropological framework.

## Studying gender and the use of texts

The use of textual sources as a line of interpretive evidence adds different analytical dimensions to historical archaeologies of gender that are worth mentioning. The documentary record, in the most recent sites, can allow the archaeologist to identify specific site occupants at particular times. It can be possible to construct from texts the number of persons attributed to each sex. Catalogs and business records make it possible to see what materials were marketed toward gender-specific consumers. This has several important consequences. By using historical labels of “man” and “woman,” historical archaeologists do not always problematize or question such labels but readily adopt them as normative categories, thus glossing over the opportunity to study alternate sexualities. This is in contrast to archaeologists working without texts who, while still influenced by the gender expectations of their own culture, more readily acknowledge that present gender roles should not be grafted onto the past. A related issue is that it is much easier to slip into presentist interpretive modes in archaeologies of the recent past. Fortunately, with the influence of queer theory and third-wave feminism, authors have been increasingly willing to recognize the range of variation in gender roles and identities in the past (e.g., Casella, 2000a; Gilchrist, 2000a; Voss, 2000a; Whelan, 1991). The richness of the textual record can be an evidentiary boon, but only if

we guard against assumptions of normative representation and recognize the active nature of the documents.

Another important difference is the source of archaeological data used in engendered analyses. Nonhistorical archaeologies have often turned to burial remains to juxtapose biological determinates of sex with artifact associations to explore how multiple gender identities may have been associated with particularly sexed bodies (e.g., Arnold and Wicker, 2001; Moore and Scott, 1997). With a few exceptions (e.g., Agarawal *et al.*, 2004; Blakey, 2001; Coruccini *et al.*, 1985; Whelan, 1991; Wilson and Cabak, 2004), skeletal remains have not been used in historical archaeology of the recent past to understand gender diversity or embodied gendered experience. Gravestone and burial paraphernalia have been slightly more widely used to look at constructions of lifecycle and gender (e.g., Cox, 1996; McKillop, 1995; Tarlow, 1999).

Instead, domestic or institutional garbage are our most commonly used sources of data. Because of this circumstance, archaeological research of the recent past has continuously wrestled with the issue of gender attribution—which artifacts can be associated with which sex—in their analyses. One of the most popular means of circumventing this problem has been for historical archaeologists to choose so-called single-sex sites to excavate. Brothels and institutions for the reform of fallen women have proven particularly popular venues for research (e.g., Costello, 2000; De Cunzo, 1995; Seifert, 2005; Seifert *et al.*, 2000). There is a certain amount of irony to brothels being presented as female households, but more recent literature has been focusing on these as sites for the study of normative and transgressive sexualities (e.g., Costello, 2000; Seifert, 2005; Yamin, 1998, 2005).

## Early development of the discipline

Like the rest of the discipline of archaeology, historical archaeologists began to turn their attention to issues of gender and sex well over a decade after other social sciences were identifying this lacuna in their research agendas. While the work of early historical archaeologists was influenced by civil rights movement in the U.S. (e.g., Deetz, 1977; McGuire, 1982; Schuyler, 1980), the feminist movement had little impact on researchers. In academic historiography, paradigm shifts emphasized the production of “social histories” that addressed the great proportions of populations whose lives formed the basis of long-term historical processes. The purpose and focus of these histories was to illustrate oppression: how, of whom, by whom, and to what end. In this effort, the investigation of gender, race, and class came to the fore (Scott, 1986). While in theory the exploration of gender in history was to consider both men and women relationally, the widespread perception of such revisionist work was that it was “women’s history” or “HER-stories.”

Historical archaeology of the late 1970s and 1980s emphasized the importance of studying the people without history (a la Wolf, 1982), but no specific focus on gender or woman’s history accompanied this trend. In the U.S., few archaeologists actively addressed gender in their interpretations before the well-known disciplinary call-to-action by Conkey and Spector (1984; but see Deagan, 1974, 1983; Mrozowski, 1984). As was the case in nonhistorical archaeologies, published contributions remained scant until the early 1990s (e.g., Beaudry, 1984; Deagan, 1983; Mrozowski, 1988; Spencer-Wood, 1987; Zeising, 1991). Gender was largely tied to the distinction of household or domestic sites, assuming a separation of public and private spheres by sex.

This “early” phase of the intellectual trend addressing gender and sex in archaeology and the social sciences in general was a politically “Western” phenomenon. European

archaeologists have noted that the issues of sex and gender have been part of their research agenda since the 1970s (Hodder, 1997; see Dommasnes, 1982), and certainly there was an awareness, if not a practice, of gender in archaeological research in the U.S. Sponsorship and tolerance for these research questions was not forthcoming in nations beyond North America, western Europe, and Australia, however. Engendered histories and archaeologies are now undertaken in other parts of the world (e.g., Ikawa-Smith, 2002; Whitehouse, 2002).

If the early discussions of gender in archaeology were only just that, it would seem that 1991 was archaeology's "year of the woman," when the discussions began to bear fruit. That year saw the publication of complementary volumes focusing on gender in nonhistorical (Conkey and Gero, 1991) and historical archaeology (Seifert, 1991a; see also Walde and Willows, 1991). While focusing on gender broadly, the articles in these volumes mainly sought to understand how the experiences of women could be drawn out in archaeological interpretations. The authors, to varying degrees, also saw themselves as bringing a feminist sensibility to the discipline, in a way that had otherwise been underdeveloped in earlier works. These works fell in the realm of "second-wave" feminism, emphasizing both the critical identification of gender biases in disciplinary practice and interpretations, and the attempt to render women "visible" in revisionist interpretations.

The 1991 thematic journal issue of *Historical Archaeology* featured a range of methodological frameworks being used to recognize gender in the past. Several used what might be classically considered processualist methods, by assigning gender categories to types or classes of artifacts or through task differentiation to identify gendered activity areas (Gibb and King, 1991; McEwan, 1991; Scott, 1991). Households and the "domestic" are the dominant loci of investigation for these studies. Another tactic was the examination of single-sex sites, such as Seifert's comparison of brothel-associated assemblages with adjacent households and boardinghouses (Seifert, 1991b). The purpose of this tactic was to identify and isolate the spaces and artifacts that were representative of women's presence and activity, in a fashion reminiscent of South's artifact patterning (1978). The benefit in these studies was the critical refutation of those practitioners who felt that gender could not be studied archaeologically, by drawing attention to some very basic ways in which the record was related to women as well as men and how they may have experienced the world differently.

The 1991 volume of *Historical Archaeology* contained several articles that have continued to shape engendered historical archaeology and foreshadow themes that would come to dominate the discipline; they deserve additional brief consideration. In her examination of women's social networks in western frontier communities, Purser provided a powerful demonstration of how historical archaeologists could use the most mundane of documents and artifacts to "examine the extent to which recognizing the gendered character of social life problematizes archaeological concepts like household, community, or human mobility" (Purser, 1991, p. 13). Purser's article remains a strong example of the potential of an engendered archaeology. Whelan (1991), in a study of Dakota mortuary remains, made an interesting argument for identifying a third-sexed individual in a historic cemetery and successfully challenged archaeologists to think beyond male-female binaries. Whelan's work first raised the possibility of studying alternate constructions of gender and sexuality, an area that has received more attention in recent works (e.g., Casella, 2000a, b; Joyce, 2000a; Meskell, 1999, 2002a; Meskell and Joyce, 2003; Schmidt and Voss, 2000; Voss, 2000a).

Wall's article (1991) introduced the concept of the domestic sphere with a convincing study from 19th century middle-class New York. Wall illustrated how themes of domesticity and the "cult of true womanhood" shaped the consumer choices of women purchasing gothic-themed ceramics for their families, while class ambitions and social posturing led to the purchase of fine porcelains for entertaining outsiders. This article was a prelude to Wall's

1994 book, *The Archaeology of Gender*. Bucking the trend to present gender relations as hegemonic across class and racial lines, Wall was careful to define the scope of applicability for her work. She does not make statements on gender at large, only on gender roles for middle-class white women in Progressive-era New York City. Although her archaeological data related to gender and class expressions in the household, her interpretations were tied to the broader historical context of class relations.

One of the more intriguing studies to play off the middle-class domesticity seen in Wall's work was DeCunzio's (1995) study of a Magdalen society in Philadelphia. DeCunzio demonstrates that exposure to middle-class materiality in an embodied ritualized setting was used to transform fallen women into repentant and reformed women. While DeCunzio's work elaborated on and expanded Wall's work, as recently discussed by Wurst (2003), gender work has been too quick to uncritically embrace the notion of the separate spheres.

Other articles, both in the thematic issue and in the wider literature, questioned the utility of artifact attribution and task differentiation. "Add women and stir," amounting to the issue of visibility, was challenged even as the exploration and meaning of gender in the archaeological context was defended. Gilchrist (1991) has noted that part of the issue was the conflation of conceptual and methodological realms. Conceptually it is a simple matter to recognize that women were present and active in the past and that our illustration of such presence has meaning and political import today. Methodologically, however, it is not so straightforward. She challenged the notion that it was either methodologically or conceptually a good idea to pursue an isolated agenda of "women's archaeology" (1991). Yentsch (1991, pp. 145–150) also questioned the pursuit of visibility through simple categorization of artifacts or tasks as monolithically masculine or feminine, suggesting that certain of those assigned domains would remain invisible until we truly begin to ask new analytical questions that are contextually appropriate. In broadening the scope of gender to an embedded or intertwined aspect of social identity, as these archaeologists have, the distinction between *feminist* archaeology and *gender* archaeology was made clear.

By 1994, engendered studies of the recent past were becoming more commonplace, and the first book-length studies were published (Gilchrist, 1994; Wall, 1994). Debates over artifact attribution were still common, but so were explorations of how diverse households internally framed gender relations and considerations of how inequality and gender were interlinked. Gender as an embedded identity was taken up in an important volume, *Those of Little Note: Gender, Race, and Class in Historical Archaeology* (Scott, 1994). Scott identified feminism, and a scholarly focus on gender, as having opened the door to investigations of complex identities and subaltern voices. In her introduction, she posited that the exploration of gender in archaeology was not optimally an end in itself but rather a point of entry to other "little noted" socially experienced lives. The vision of Scott and her contributors was to use archaeology to articulate individuals or households with larger historical processes such as colonialism or other oppressive social institutions.

Scott (1994, p. 5) credited feminist theory with bringing awareness to many archaeologists of how gender bias in our questions and practices has foreshortened our understanding of past lives, particularly of women. The recognition of these biases allows us to broaden our definitions of who the disenfranchised are, such as Scott and her contributors have done (see Jackson, 1994; Muller, 1994; Spencer-Wood, 1994). In this framework there is no single or universal construction of gender. Instead there are a plethora of situationally mediated gender experiences.

Also published in 1994 was Gilchrist's study of the engendered spaces of medieval monasticism, which was revolutionary on several fronts. The study relies most heavily on interpretations of architecture, from monasteries and nunneries previously excavated, with

little accompanying artifactual evidence. Through a comparative analysis of the design of internal spaces and relative accessibility of male and female ritual spaces, Gilchrist was able to demonstrate that the physical experience of monasticism was shaped by gender. Gilchrist's work powerfully demonstrated that engendered archaeologies did not require access to women's "things" so much as the willingness to recognize that gender relations are manifested in all aspects of a society's materiality.

Gilchrist's work differs significantly from her contemporaries' work in that she explicitly examined gender as a product of discursive social relations, rather than simply seeking to identify women. The focus of Americanist archaeology on finding "women" rather than "gender" was noted by Little (1994a, p. 10): A "distinction can be made between an archaeology of gender, which implies an approach of looking for women's artifacts, and a feminist archaeology, which aims at changing interpretive frameworks. Feminism is a politics aimed at changing gender-based power relations."

As we discuss further in a later section, the political agendas of feminism and womanism are largely absent from archaeologies of the recent past. Yet, in these early works of engendered historical archaeology, it is possible to see the origins of the themes that have come to dominate the field over the last ten years.

## Gender and feminist practice today

Today, the majority of engendered and feminist historical archaeology can be seen as falling into three main arenas: (1) the relationship between gender and other aspects of social identity, particularly as tied to the entrenching of sexism and inequality in modern society; (2) in studies that challenge notions of normative gender roles and, by association, households; and (3) in feminist approaches to the practice and presentation of archaeology. These are not mutually exclusive categories; rather scholars engaged in one arena of inquiry often articulate with one or both of the others.

### Archaeologies of gender difference and inequality

The desire of early engendered work to illuminate the otherwise hidden experiences of women in part through historical archaeology quickly merged with one of the other driving agendas of the field—to contribute to the writing of histories that focus on the "undocumented" peoples of the recent past (e.g., Deetz, 1977; Schuyler, 1980). While this early historical archaeological work was influenced intellectually by the Civil Rights movement, more recent work in this vein, whether actively acknowledged or not, has been greatly influenced by feminist calls for multivocal histories. Archaeologists studying gender in the recent past see gender as just one arena in which social identity and difference are asserted. The holy trinity of identity for many historical archaeologists is gender-race/ethnicity-class (e.g., Delle *et al.*, 2000; McGuire and Recknor, 2002; Paynter, 2000; Scott, 1994), but how to look at these aspects of identity in a unified whole has remained theoretically and methodologically challenging for archaeologists. Often, analyses seek to isolate different strands of social persona, as if a person can be easily subdivided into smaller portions. Spelman (1988, p. 15), in a critique of second-wave feminism, referred to this means of studying identity as a pop-bead approach that treated race, class, and gender as isolatable and distinct.

Baudry *et al.* (1991), in their piece entitled "Artifacts and active voices," offer one of the most integrated frameworks for understanding the articulation of multiple social identities. They argue that material culture should be viewed as a critical component of

social discourse, meaningful at multiple levels for different actors in the reproduction or alteration of gender, class, and ethnicity. In this framework, analytical attention is given to complex social construction rather than the isolation of gender.

The studies of the recent past that best handle class-gender-race articulations focus on middle-class white women. It is worth noting that the vast majority of literature produced in historical archaeology on gender focuses on the experiences of white women (e.g., De Cunzo, 1995; Gilchrist, 1994; Wall, 1994). This circumstance is ironic; the third-wave feminist critique has been that the previous generation of feminists took white women's experiences to be normative and universal, ignoring issues important to minority and lesbian women. Studies of women of color have been fairly limited overall until recently. Deagan's (1983) ground-breaking work at Spanish St. Augustine seems to have encouraged a number of scholars to look at gender in Spanish colonial contexts (e.g., Jamieson, 2000; McEwan, 1991; Rothschild, 2003; Voss, 2000b). There has been some study of Native American women (e.g., Clark, 2003; Howlett, 2004; Lightfoot, 2004; Lightfoot *et al.*, 1997; Martinez, 1998; Prine, 2000; Whelan, 1991). Remarkably, although African-American archaeology is one of the fastest growing areas of study within historical archaeology, with some notable exceptions little attention has been paid to issues of gender (e.g., Delle, 2000; Edwards-Ingram, 2001; Wilkie, 2000a; Yentsch, 1994). Only recently has the first edited volume on the topic of African-American gender been published (Galle and Young, 2004). Researchers studying Chinese-American sites have generally ignored the issue of gender, despite the recognition that many of the communities were predominantly men. There has been some study of Chinese prostitutes (Wegars, 1993). For text-aided archaeologies of the more distant past, articulations of gender and status have been explored, though issues of race and ethnicity are rarely considered in the absence of a pluralistic social context (Linduff, 2002; Rosen-Ayalon, 2002; Sweely, 1999).

It has been in only the last five years that third-wave feminism has had a real visibility in archaeologies of the recent past. The major turn in these case studies was in recognizing that gender could not be viewed in isolation but rather "as relational to a host of other identity markers such as age, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and so on" (Meskell, 2002b). To this end, third-wave feminist archaeologies incorporated frameworks of queer theory, subaltern identities, embodiment, personhood, and phenomenology, and explicitly addressed political commitments. In 2000, *The Archaeologies of Sexuality*, edited by Schmidt and Voss, was the first volume to include studies focusing on the archaeology of sexuality. Casella (2000a, b), in this volume and another work, presented a discussion of the material manifestations of lesbian relationships within an Australian women's factory. While the work is groundbreaking, it is worth observing that the work is another example of gender being studied within a context presented as "female only." Queer theory received another boost in the archaeological literature in an overview by Voss (2000a).

In the same year, Franklin (2001) published a call for archaeologists to incorporate a black feminist perspective into interpretations of race, class, and gender. Franklin urges archaeologists to follow black feminists' example by seeing race, gender, and class as inherently entangled. Recently, additional volumes have been published that also explore these entangled subjectivities (Barile and Brandon, 2004; Galle and Young, 2004). These forays into third-wave feminism represent some of the strongest expressions of feminist political engagements in engendered archaeology of the recent past. In contrast, archaeologists working in the text-aided past of Egypt (Meskell, 1999, 2002a, 2004), Mesoamerica (Joyce, 2000a,b; Meskell and Joyce, 2003), and medieval England (Gilchrist, 1994, 2000a, b) have been quicker to recognize the interpretive power of theories of embodiment as a way to explore the complexities of identity. It is difficult to discern why the political



agendas of feminism have had such an ambivalent role in engendered interpretations of the archaeological record. Instead, feminist thought has had the clearest impact in the realm of disciplinary practice.

### Engendered household archaeologies: Challenging notions of the “norm”

While archaeologists of the deeper past have confronted the difficulties of defining a household archaeologically, historical archaeologists have not always problematized the notion of the household, too often relying upon the documentary record to define “house.” Women of the recent past have been strongly associated with house and hearth—the domestic sphere. As a result, there has been a tendency in historical archaeology to study households as expressions of female influence and decision-making rather than as realms of gender negotiation. In the last five years, there has been an important shift away from this trend, with scholars confronting a range of different living arrangements and explicitly engaging with the broader literature regarding household archaeology (e.g., Barile and Brandon, 2004; Franklin, 1997a; Lawrence, 1999). As a result, normative notions of “family” and “the domestic” have been problematized, by recognizing the different subject positions held by actors within a household and by more explicitly recognizing the economic dimensions of households. Instead of households being categorized as an autonomous analytical unit, households are reconceptualized as comprising multiple actors at different stages of life course, occupying differing social persona and gender roles. Households are sites of cultural production and negotiation. Recent archaeologies of identity illustrate that multiple social identities are in discourse within any household, be they mothers, fathers, children, extended kin, boarders, servants, and so on. Use of texts has allowed archaeologists of the recent past to identify, in some settings, specific household members, their respective ages, occupations, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and ascribed gender. Through comparisons of materials recovered from multiple households, archaeologists of the recent past have examined the ways that materiality is used recursively to construct and contest social identities within and between households (e.g., Clark, 2005; Mrozowski *et al.*, 1996; Mullins, 2001; Wood, 2004). Some of the more exciting aspects of this research has examined evidence of changing life course in households, particularly childhood.

Children have recently received greater attention within household archaeologies (e.g., Baxter, 2005; Sofaer-Derevenski, 1997, 2000; Yamin, 2002) in part because of their distinctive material culture such as toys and child-specific domestic wares and medicines. While childhood is a life phase fundamentally characterized by physiologic growth and development, it is also socially constructed. Childhood experiences are shaped by gender expectations and the race and class positions held by the household (Baxter, 2005; Pearson and Mullins, 1999; Wilkie, 2000c; Yamin, 2002). Childhood is characterized not only in play but also in work and learning, and ethnographic/ethnohistoric observations can provide examples of children’s participation in production and apprenticeship (Baxter, 2005; Finlay, 1997; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Luedtke, 1997). One of the most fundamental aspects of childhood learning is gendered roles and ideologies, and this transmission of social knowledge is often accomplished through material and spatial structuring of experience (Joyce, 2000b; Laurence, 2000; Sofaer Derevenski, 1997; Spencer-Wood, 2003).

While children have received more attention, child-rearing and nurturing has been less explicitly studied. Mothering in particular has been largely taken for granted in archaeological studies, treated as a universal female experience and thus not subject to historical shifts in character. Two archaeological studies have recently demonstrated the materiality of the mother-child relationship and the complex role and identity of mothers.



An excellent example is a case study in the archaeology of the very recent past by Buchli and Lucas (2000). They recorded and mapped a recently abandoned council flat. The apartment had been fled to by a single mother and her child who were believed to have been seeking to avoid confrontation with the child's father. Using material evidence, such as drawings made by the child, the authors challenge readers to reflect about how a child's world is actively structured by a parent, the small ways children create sheltered spaces, and how a child understands the notion of family. It is also potent in its choice of a decidedly "non-normative" household for the case study, and while the particulars may not translate to other sites, the framework for reading such a space can.

In a more traditional archaeological study, *The Archaeology of Mothering*, focused on a late 19th to early 20th century household, Wilkie (2003) has attempted to create a detailed microscale exploration of the traces of an African-American mother's experience. Using a broad range of documentary, ethnohistoric, and material evidence, Wilkie illustrated the ways that mothering as a social persona has shifted in important ways historically and has emphasized how race, class, and other aspects of personhood have influenced the embodied experience of motherhood for African-American women. Both of these case studies attempt to broaden our notions of what constitutes the "domestic sphere," far beyond the classic Victorian ideal that usually informs our domestic stereotypes. The microscale or biographical focus used in these studies are also linked in part to feminist epistemologies (Gilchrist, 2000b).

While there is a growing consideration of child-rearing and nurturing in households, still other engendered work is re-evaluating and expanding our understandings of historical households as economic units, particularly as related to the construction of class identities and as sites of production and consumption. Taking a disaggregated view of the household has allowed for a more nuanced view of what we can understand about consumer practices from material culture. If we analytically distinguish between socially related groups and the lived in domestic spaces, we can recognize how members of the former negotiate the structuring of the latter. Instead of being a cohesive whole in which "the group" makes consumer choices, a household may be a space of conflict over such choices and the expression of particular identities. An early example of this is Mrozowski's (1988) documentary analysis of newspaper advertisements and anecdotal report of gendered consumer patterns. Class and gender form a powerful intersection in consumer patterns as well, often in contention (Kruczek-Aaron, 2002). In other cases, gendered consumption may be rendered invisible by assumptions about economic contributions to the household, and when those contributions are questioned a surprising amount of detail may emerge (Nelson *et al.*, 2002; Wood, 2004). Klein (1991) tested several processual-styled predictive models of consumer behavior for 19th century sites and found that changing gender roles were a better indicator than market accessibility or socioeconomic status in ceramics purchases. Although the style of this study may be dated, the results are suggestive of the importance of gender in household archaeologies. Few scholars have taken up this line of inquiry; they have focused largely on documentary analyses (Cook *et al.*, 1996; Spencer-Wood, 1996, 2003; but see also Mullins, 2001, for considerations of race and household consumption).

Finally, recent archaeological investigations of households have construed them much more broadly, as any small-scale localized socially related group and the landscape of their interaction. This has given us a far more fluid basis for looking at relational identity and material-spatial practices of daily life, without being confined by traditional (and probably not very representative) notions of the household as a domestic or economic unit. Brothels (Costello, 2000; Kennedy, 1989; Seifert, 1991b, 2005), monasteries and nunneries (Gilchrist, 1994, 2000a; Kryder-Reid, 1994), plantations and ranchos (Battle, 2004; Bonine,

2004; Clark, 2005; Silliman, 2004), mining and logging camps (Lawrence, 1999; Pappas, 2004; Wood, 2004), cooperatives (Spencer-Wood, 2004) and boarding houses (Larsen, 1994; Mrozowski *et al.*, 1996) have all come under consideration in household frameworks. The benefit in this broader definition “opens up interesting possibilities for household analysis—the household as “small” landscape . . . Practice theory, power relations, gender constructions, and many other subjects that have been treated successfully via the landscape analysis beg to be applied in similar fashion to the household” (Brandon and Barile, 2004, p. 6).

Collectively, these engendered archaeologies of households serve to illuminate the diversity of lived experiences that characterized the recent past. In bringing to light the diversity of productive and stable households that existed in the past, historical archaeologists are posing important challenges to current social and political discourses that seek to create and reproduce in the present a mythical, normative household type that never existed. It is fitting then that we now discuss the ways that feminist theorizing is affecting the practice and presentation of archaeologies of the recent past.

### Reflections of practice: Feminist critique of the discipline

Feminism is a political theoretical position with the stated goals, in the simplest terms, of working toward women’s social, economic, and political equality while attempting to understand the societal structures that allow for the perpetuation of white patriarchy. Few engendered works of the recent archaeological past have an explicit feminist stance beyond the goal of remediating androcentric versions of history, and even this goal is not always stated. Even the term “patriarchy”—a concept so central to understanding the subjugation of women—is rarely used in the literature (cf. Beaudry, 2004; Little, 1994b). Simply put, there is a great deal of literature of the recent past on gender that seems to be disarticulated from feminist theory. This is not to say that feminist theorizing or political agendas are without influence in the discipline, as already evidenced by the growing influences of second- and third-wave feminism. Political expression has taken a few limited forms, in experiments in multivocal presentations of archaeological materials and in critiques of the structure of the discipline.

Storytelling, or the use of narrative as an alternate or complementary means of presenting archaeological data, has been part of historical archaeological practice before the feminist movement (e.g., Ascher and Fairbanks, 1971; Deetz, 1977). However, with the publication of Gero and Conkey’s edited volume (1991), the use of narrative has been appropriated as part of a feminist practice in archaeology (Joyce, 2002a; Spector, 1991, 1993; Tringham, 1991). In 1998, the Society for Historical Archaeology published a special issue of its journal dedicated to narrative presentations (Praetzelis and Praetzelis, 1998), followed in another issue by a published forum discussion of the role of narrative in the field (Gibb, 2000; Little, 2000; Majewski, 2000). Beaudry’s (1998) and Costello’s (1998) contributions to the storytelling issue demonstrate how narrative is a powerful tool for bringing texture, nuance, and humanity to women’s experiences as evidenced through archaeology. Joyce (2002a) has provided the most detailed consideration of narrative in her edited volume, *The Languages of Archaeology*. She sees narrative as a means for archaeologists to create multivocal and broadly accessible archaeological interpretations and presentations.

Facilitating public and descendant interaction as part of archaeological practice also has been a hallmark of feminist historical archaeology (e.g., Edwards-Ingram, 2001; Franklin, 1997b, 2001; Wilkie and Bartoy, 2000). Franklin (1997b, 2001) has explicitly tied public archaeology and community partnering to a feminist agenda, recognizing that third-wave feminism offers a powerful tool for engaging in discourses about race and gender inequalities.

Feminist theory has inspired not only strong political engagements outside the discipline but also has turned our gaze inward, to be self-reflexive about how gender bias and a lack of diversity has affected the work that archaeologists produce. For example, bibliometric studies of citation practices in archaeology have found that while women are approaching gender parity in publication rates, there may still be a tendency to undercite women (Hutson, 2002). This trend also is pronounced in the journal *Historical Archaeology*, and Beaudry and White (1994) have proposed that this may be a result of both a reluctance of women to submit articles and a gender division of labor in the discipline that devalues or marginalizes women's contributions (see also Gero, 1985; Victor and Beaudry, 1992; Wylie, 1993). An even more drastic underrepresentation of African-American (Franklin, 1997c, 2001), Native American (Atalay, 2004), and other nonwhite groups still characterizes the discipline. This leads to the uncomfortable sense that while archaeologists will now attend to subaltern pasts, we still do not adequately address their presents, or presence.

### The cutting edge and future directions

The engendered archaeologies being published today are more theoretically diverse, socially directed, and nuanced than any produced before in the field. There are several shortcomings of the collective literature that remain to be addressed. In this section we discuss what we see to be the lacuna in the field and the emerging bodies of study that represent future direction in the field. From our perspective, the field is strangely lacking in three vital areas. First, the field remains mainly focused on the study of women versus understanding gender relationships between different segments of society. Second, gender is often analyzed in isolation from other aspects of social identity, so that much of the nuance and texture of past social relations is lost. Third, at a time when women's social, economic, and political rights are threatened by the culture wars, archaeologists must embrace a more politically engaged and explicit feminist perspective in their work.

An effect of a woman-centered archaeology of gender has been the exclusion of considerations of masculinity, which has grown as a theoretical engagement of feminism (e.g., Connell, 1995, 2000; Hooks, 2004). Given how many authors recognize gender as a relational social construct, it is astonishing how few studies attempt to look at men and women in discursive social relations (cf. Claney, 1996; Fesler, 2004; Voss, 2000a; Wilkie, 2000b; Wilkie and Farnsworth, 2005), failing to consider how multiple femininities engage with multiple masculinities. Indeed, there is a scant body of literature within archaeology dealing with masculinity as a gendered construct (cf. Hardesty, 1994; Harrison, 2002; Joyce, 2000a,b; Knapp, 1998a,b; Wilkie, 1998), although there is increasing awareness that this is an arena to be expanded (Knapp, 1998b; Scott, 2004; Wurst, 2003).

Social historians have been focused on understanding shifting notions of masculinity and manhood since the early 1990s (e.g., Bederman, 1995; Carnes and Griffen, 1990; Chudacoff, 1999; McLaren, 1997), and their works have profound implications for understanding national discourses on gender roles and identity. Likewise, there has been no shortage of research on male-dominated sites such as forts and military installations, lumber camps, saloons, gold rush settlements, and fraternities (e.g., Clements, 1993; Comer, 1996; Hardesty, 1994; Starbuck, 1994), but with few exceptions (e.g., Knapp and Piggott, 1997; Pappas, 2004; Wilkie, 1998) the role that gender norms and expectations played in structuring these societies has been lacking in interpretations.

The failure to “find men” is connected to another ongoing challenge to engendered research—understanding intersections of race, class, gender, and other aspects of social

identities. It has become apparent that it is impossible to separate these aspects of social identity. Instead, these are facets of identity that intersect with one another in ways that cannot be disentangled neatly. Black feminists have long recognized the importance of understanding gender as part of a series of intersecting identities (e.g., Collins, 2000; Giddings, 1984; Spelman, 1988). It is, therefore, not enough to study gender. We need to find girls, boys, mothers, fathers, uncles, bachelors, and a myriad of other culturally constructed social positions that are shaped by gender. To this end, there are several emerging fields of interest within engendered historical archaeology that promise to shape the field in years to come. These include the development of archaeologies of masculinity and complementarity (Joyce, 2000b), and archaeologies of embodiment and personhood. These fields are developing from third-wave feminist theorizing (e.g., Butler, 1990, 1993; Collins, 2000; Giddings, 1984; Spelman, 1988; Strathern, 1992).

Archaeologies of personhood in particular seem to be best suited for realizing the potential of engendered and feminist archaeologies. Personhood is a way of conceptualizing past actors as the sum of their ascribed and achieved social positions, and provides an important alternative to the western notion of the “individual” as an autonomous and independently motivated actor (Gillespie, 2000; Meskell, 1999; Meskell and Joyce, 2003). Cross-culturally, we know that what defines a human as a person varies widely from culture to culture, and the cultural responsibilities and obligations of personhood shift through an actor’s lifecourse (Fowler, 2004). Personhood is an embodied experience, and therefore gender remains a central concept to understanding personhood. Unlike research that focuses strictly on gender, taking a personhood perspective encourages archaeologists to recognize finer grains of social difference and experiences among past actors. Because personhood is constructed through discursive social relationships, using this approach it becomes more difficult to exclude certain subject positions from analytical consideration.

Interest in personhood has developed independently in prehistory (e.g., Fowler, 2004; Gillespie, 2000) but has mainly not been informed by the works of historical archaeologists. While historical archaeologists have not always been explicit in their theorizing of personhood, their engendered work provides important insights into how this issue can be approached materially through artifacts, architecture, and landscape. An understanding of how materiality is used to construct, manipulate, negotiate, and transform gendered embodiment in the recent past can provide new avenues of consideration for scholars working in other time periods, whether they have access to texts or not. All archaeologists have access to multiple lines of interpretive evidence, and historical archaeological practice, particularly as related to the study of gender, has been at the forefront of creating sophisticated archaeological interpretations woven of multiple evidentiary lines.

Finally, engendered archaeologies can more explicitly engage with the political agendas of feminism. Archaeology offers a powerful tool for exploring the ways that gender inequalities come to be constructed and how they are reproduced and contested through material culture. We live in a time when history is recast for political expediency with alarming frequency, particularly as related to issues of reproductive freedom, marriage rights, and responsibilities for child-rearing. Archaeologies of the recent and the ancient pasts offer physical evidence of other gender and sexual realities that have existed in the human past. In particular, historical archaeologists can attest to how recent some of the attitudes taken as normative are—whether in presenting evidence that chemical abortion was an accepted norm in colonial life or demonstrating that the stay-at-home mom of yore is a political legend. To date, few historical archaeologies of gender have considered reproductive issues faced by women historically (cf. Costello, 2000; Crist, 2005; Wilkie, 2003; Yamin, 1998, 2005). The ways that working women juggled child care, the development of the feminist movements, the

impacts of differential educational opportunities and pay, and notions of feminine beauty (cf. Joyce, 2002b) are all issues that have political ramifications for today's society. Feminism deals with the impacts of patriarchy on men as well as on children and women of all class and racial backgrounds. It is not contradictory to suggest that engendered archaeologies could attend to the feminist agenda while investigating relational, entangled identities. In the 21st century, we must recognize that archaeological research always has political implications. Knowledge of the construction of gender identities in the past holds the power to make positive changes today. We can, if we choose, make the connections of past to present by challenging the bases of present gender inequities.

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