

CSWS *Review*



PERSPECTIVES ON
MESOAMERICAN
CULTURES:
CSWS FACULTY AWARDED NEH GRANT

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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

In Memoriam—Miriam M. Johnson

Miriam M. Johnson, a Harvard Ph.D., professor emerita of sociology, and former CSWS acting director, passed away on November 21, 2007. She is remembered as one of the cofounders of CSWS. The staff and members of CSWS are indebted to Miriam for her strong advocacy in establishing a UO center focused exclusively on the issues of women and gender in society.

Miriam played a prominent role, along with professor emerita Joan Acker, in providing the leadership to establish today's Center for the Study of Women in Society in 1973.

Both Miriam and Joan met with William Harris in the home of UO President Robert Clark, at which time Harris declared his intention to donate the significant estate of his wife, Jane Grant, to establish a center for research on women. For the next thirty-plus years, Miriam continued to be an active CSWS member and contributed generously to the center.

Miriam served three times, across three decades, as acting director for CSWS—in 1974–75, 1986–87, and 1990–91. Joan, who served multiple years as CSWS executive director, and Miriam were friends and colleagues across this entire period. Recalling the early, heady years of women's rights, Title IX, feminism, and the establishment of the center, Joan remembered Miriam's traits and contributions:

"Miriam was a fine intellectual but was also a very modest person. She was supportive of others and took little credit for the noteworthy things she did as a researcher and a leader in women's studies and research."

Joan recalled how much fun they had as she and Miriam pioneered some of the first research in women's studies. "I remember a research project Miriam and I did on feminism—the Feminism Scale. The question that correlated most highly with who was most likely to identify with feminism was 'do you shave your legs?' We had a good laugh over that."



Miriam also coauthored a number of chapters in key books on women and society with UO colleague Jean Stockard, including *Sex Inequality in Cultural Symbolism and Interpersonal Relations* (1987), *The Social Origins of Male Dominance* (1986), and *Biological Influences on Gender* (1986).

Jean credits Miriam with providing a highly productive and enjoyable collaboration. "From Miriam I learned the importance of sociology as a science, a field where we advance knowledge by careful testing of hypotheses and do so with precision, care, and an open mind."

"She was truly a pioneer in the field," Jean observes. "In fact, her doctoral dissertation in the 1950s was on gender. Her writings all pertained to gender and were models of academic excellence—broad intellectual

"Miriam was a fine intellectual but was also a very modest person. She was supportive of others and took little credit for the noteworthy things she did as a researcher and a leader in women's studies and research."

—Professor Emerita Joan R Acker



background, careful reasoning, and incisive thought processes."

CSWS honors and remembers Miriam Johnson for her theoretical and empirical research that advanced the knowledge of women and gender as a whole and set a precedent for the field of women's studies. Miriam's leadership helped establish the bedrock for subsequent generations of women scholars.

CSWS FACULTY AND STAFF

Lynn Stephen > associate director for program development

Judith Musick > associate director for grants and administration

Stephanie Wood > associate director for development and dissemination

Shirley Marc > office coordinator

Peggy McConnell > accountant

Title IX Turns Thirty-Five



From left to right: Peg Rees, Krista Parent, Lois Youngen, Bev Smith; Professor Emerita Joan Acker

It has been thirty-five years since the approval of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which were to ensure equal access to education for both men and women. Truly, this is a historic landmark to celebrate. CSWS joined with the UO women's basketball team and a number of private donors to cohost a celebration of the law's thirty-fifth anniversary on November 27. A multigenerational crowd of almost 200 people gathered in The Club at Autzen Stadium. Joan Acker, professor emerita and founding director of CSWS, was one of the keynote speakers.

Five other women associated with the UO also spoke, each pioneers in their own right who further the ongoing work for full participation and recognition of women in academia and athletics. They were Bev Smith, head coach of the UO women's basketball team; Peg Rees, associate director of the Department of Physical Education and Recreation; Lois Youngen, UO professor emerita and original member of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League; Krista Parent, superintendent of the South Lane School District and 2007 National Superintendent of the Year; and Tamika Nurse, starting point guard for the UO women's basketball team.

The evening's overarching theme was that, for the first time, Title IX opened up opportunities for girls and women to excel at their full capacity, which was every bit as impressive and significant as the capacities of boys and men.

While we often associate Title IX solely with high school and collegiate athletics, the law is much broader and has equalizing implications for all aspects of education, stating:

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Looking back to the era before Title IX, Acker reminded the audience that passing the amendment was one part of a climate of tremendous change around how women regarded themselves in society. Women like Acker were already tackling seemingly insurmountable obstacles to achieve gender equity. Using her own example as a case in point, when Acker was hired as a faculty member in sociology in 1966, the UO had only women instructors and adjuncts and just one female professor.

"I was part of a movement that was attempting to build a knowledge base about women and society," said Acker. "There were maybe a total of five or six books and a few journal articles on the subject."

"We didn't even have the word *gender* then," joked Acker.

In 1972, Acker, along with the small handful of other women on the UO faculty, asked the university to develop an affirmative action plan to increase the representation of women and minorities on campus.

"Our research revealed great

disparity between women and men in status, research opportunities, and salaries," said Acker. "But the UO would not consider establishing an affirmative action plan."

The next year there was the federal executive order for all organizations that had more than \$50,000 in funding from the federal government to establish an affirmative action plan. "So the UO did comply then because they had to," Acker recalled, "but they wouldn't do it when it was proposed from within."

The burgeoning awareness about the lack of information about women in the social sciences led Acker and colleagues to build a center to expand research opportunities in 1969-70. That center was a precursor of CSWS. As a sociologist, Acker was well aware that the only paradigm being studied was the role of women in families.

"Absolutely no questions were being asked about models of patriarchy, female oppression, and inequity," said Acker. "It was assumed that a woman's place was in the home and that was the way the world worked."

Pioneering the creation of CSWS as one of the nation's first centers for research on women, Acker helped shepherd in a time of ferment and creative scholarship. The research that was pursued by the UO women who envisioned and then established CSWS changed the way women thought of themselves and would think of themselves into the future.

Nonetheless, as Coach Bev Smith concluded, "Title IX still requires promotion and vigilance. The first generation of Title IX'ers were the torchbearers for this legislation. Now women need to continue to support women if we are to keep the ball of opportunity in the air."

KUDOS

Do you know who is on sabbatical leave in the Galápagos Islands? Go to the CSWS website (CSWS.UOREGON.EDU/NEWSLETTER/KUDOS.HTM) and click on "Kudos" to read about this and more of what our affiliates are doing.

THE VIRGIN, THE ‘CONCUBINE,’ AND THE COMPUTER:

CSWS HOSTS A NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

A woman stands between the two powerful men who are the supreme leaders of their peoples. Each leader is flanked by ranks of their men—soldiers, advisers, and dignitaries painted in great detail—but the focus of these pictorial records is on the woman. It is she who holds the central spot in the encounter between cultures from two sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

Who is this woman and why is she at the center of these pictorial accounts of the meeting between the Spanish conquistador, Hernando Cortés, and men such as Montezuma, an indigenous leader of the Nahuatl peoples? How do source materials such as these records provide valuable information about the roles of women in politics, society, and culture that are missing from written texts?

Intriguing questions focused on historical source documents, women, and Mesoamerican culture will be addressed by CSWS scholars Stephanie Wood and Judith Musick, who were recently awarded a competitive grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to host a summer institute for teachers. High school and middle school faculty members from around the United States will be selected to participate through a competitive application process. The purpose of the four-week institute is to enable these educators to integrate Mesoamerican cultural heritage source materials into curricular units in history and language classes. A special focus of the institute is to provide access to rare primary research materials that reveal the role



Classic image of Doña Marina interpreting from the Florentine Codex, Book XII.

of women in precontact and post-contact Mesoamerican society, such as the figure of Malintzin pictured in the sixteenth-century drawing above, an indigenous woman who lived in Mexico five centuries ago and served as a slave and interpreter to Cortés and bore a child he fathered.

Two CSWS associate directors will head the institute’s interdisciplinary team. Musick is director of the Wired Humanities Project and Wood is a senior research associate and coordinator for the Feminist Humanities and the Wired Humanities projects. Musick, director of the technology



Stephanie Wood



Judith Musick

component of this institute, plans to introduce a new digital “interdiscipline” component of historical studies, which can present unique approaches to cultural heritage materials for scholars and teachers.

Wood, author of four books, dozens of articles on Mesoamerica, and a coeditor of the *Handbook of Latin American Studies’* “Mesoamerican Ethnohistory” series since 1995, is directing the Mesoamerican content portion of the institute. She is a specialist in pictorial and textual manuscripts produced in indigenous communities of New Spain. She will present

materials that focus on the role of indigenous women in Mesoamerican history that will help teachers understand Mexican history today.

Musick and Wood collaborate on the UO Mapas Project, which has benefited from a two-year NEH grant (2006–8). This is a digital collection of pictorial Mesoamerican manuscripts that will be featured prominently in the institute. In addition, teachers will benefit from access to the Virtual Mesoamerican Archive, also created by Musick and Wood, a global online finding aid with links to more than 10,000 Mesoamerican heritage materials housed in museums, archives, and libraries worldwide.

CSWS supports the unique component of their work that archives, digitizes, and interprets rare source materials used to uncover the history of women as cultural and social catalysts in Mesoamerican civilizations.

Other institute team members include two scholars from Mexico—John Sullivan, director, and Delfina de la Cruz de la Cruz, Nahuatl instructor

(Zacatecas Institute for Teaching and Research in Ethnology); Marc Zender, anthropology (Harvard University and the Peabody Museum); Carolyn Tate, art (Texas Tech); Sandra Noble, director (Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc.); and University of Oregon faculty members Lynn Stephen (anthropology), Robert Haskett (history), and Ron Lancaster (teacher education).

Plans for an NEH summer institute for schoolteachers are congruent with CSWS's early focus of "taking research beyond our own UO community of scholars," said Musick. "This institute is the natural result of our on-going experiment with supplementing and enriching curriculum at various educational levels with primary research and source materials."

The institute will explore new ways of viewing the European invasion through the eyes of the indigenous peoples who struggled to survive and preserve the remnants of ancient traditions while also adopting and adapting European ways as they saw fit. Historical narratives and pictorial records, written and painted in native languages and pictographic styles, will be given special attention for the light they shed on the Spanish colonial experience for native peoples.

Both Musick and Wood recognize that teachers are finding increasing numbers of students in their classrooms with family histories rooted in Latino-indigenous cultures. Teachers also face a challenge bringing information about women in past societies and cultures into their curricular units. Too often, textbooks are woefully outdated in terms of how they approach history and the types of material they reference.

"History textbooks available to secondary level teachers are simply not current with the research that is being carried out and published at the university level," Musick points out.

"In fact," she noted, "the U.S. history book used when I graduated high school in 1961—*A History of a Free People*—was the same book my son used when he graduated in 1991!"

"Reusing a thirty-year old textbook, even with possible minor revisions, underscores the fact that our secondary schools are not able to keep up with the discovery of new evidentiary documentation that can entirely reorient our understanding of women's place in the making of society and culture," said Musick.

The use of technology along with the online portal sites such as the Virtual Mesoamerican Archive (VMA) can capture the latest discoveries in archaeology, ethnohistory, and art history, bringing the cultures and histories of Mesoamerica directly into the classroom in a stimulating and affordable manner. Teachers will be allowed access to images of primary source materials for use in the classroom without worry of copyright violation, since the Wired Humanities Project staff has obtained permission for such usage as they have built the VMA.

Several institute sessions will highlight women and their role in founding towns and lineages, as well as two iconic figures, in particular—La Malintzin (known as Malinche

or Doña Marina) and the Virgin of Guadalupe (who some see as an Aztec goddess figure called "Tonantzin"). Indigenous responses to these women are intrinsically linked to both reverence and controversy. Mexicans and Chicanas or Chicanos have, throughout history, interacted with both figures as dual personal and political symbols, shaping them into embodiments of ethnic and national identity, and, more recently, radicalizing their representations in a rejection of patriarchal forms.

For example, Malinche the slave and translator to Cortés, was blamed for opening the doors to the invaders and "betraying her own people," as she facilitated Cortés' march against the Aztecs. Over time, many have come to realize she had few choices, as an adolescent slave, separated from her family and community. The image of Malinche has shifted away from complicit concubine of Cortés to proud mother of *mestizaje* (mixed heritage).

Visiting faculty member and Nahua colleague, Delfina de la Cruz de la Cruz, will help orient and remind teachers of the respect we need to bring to such heritage materials. She will also help the institute's participants understand how her community views these histories today.

The NEH-funded program will bring a high level of recognition to CSWS and the UO on the national and state level. The directors are celebrating the anticipated success of the NEH summer institute by planning ahead for future courses. There is hope to develop an institute that alternates sites between the UO and Oaxaca, Mexico.

Applicants who are selected to attend the institute will receive a stipend for travel, lodging, and materials.

CSWS newsletter readers who know of middle and high school teachers qualified for an NEH summer institute opportunity should recommend that they contact Stephanie Wood, Wired Humanities Project, 1201 University of Oregon, Eugene OR 97403-1201, in time for the application deadline of March 3, 2008.



Mural by Desiderio Xochitiotzin based on the Mexican pictorial manuscripts such as the Lienzo de Tlaxcala. Photo by Musick, 1999.

CSWS Plans Mesoamerican Textiles Exhibit, Summer 2008

The University of Oregon's Erb Memorial Union will be the site of an exhibit featuring twentieth-century hand-woven Mayan garments, called *huipiles*. Indigenous women produce the richly textured blouses and skirts as a means of preserving their indigenous cultural heritage.



Aaron Seagraves, a graduate student in the School of Architecture and Allied Arts who works with the Wired Humanities Project, will curate the collection under the supervision of Stephanie Wood and Judith Musick and with assistance from the staff at the Museum of Natural and Cultural History. The exhibit complements the NEH summer institute's theme of revealing cultural history through source material such as paintings, textiles, and other cultural artifacts.

The institute will highlight the garments in the exhibit as an illustration of the ways women create and preserve meaning across time. "Although a few women worked as scribes and historians in early times, most women didn't have the opportunity to create written texts," Wood said. "Instead, for example, they could culturally encode garments and other textiles to ensure the survival of important aspects of their life experiences and world view."

A number of local women who have traveled extensively in Mexico

will be loaning or donating special textiles for the summer exhibit. For example, retired anthropology professor Katarina Digman spent considerable time in the villages of Mexico. Digman was fascinated by the way the women weave, supporting each loom by resting it on their knees and tying one end to a tree and the other end to their torsos. The blouses were often given to her as gifts of friendship.

Another supporter, Nancy Hughes,

has collected beautiful *huipiles* during her charitable work on the Stove Project, a program that donates cooking stoves to Mesoamerican women to help reduce harmful smoke pollution from open cooking fires and reduce biofuel consumption.

More information on the dates and location of the textile exhibit will be available in the spring. Contact Stephanie Wood, swood@uoregon.edu, or call CSWS, (541) 346-5015.

WGS Announces New Minor in Queer Studies

The proposed queer studies (QS) minor is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary program with a goal to study sexuality as a complex historical and cultural formation. Rather than understand sexuality as merely a feature of private intimacy or as a result of unchanging biological forces, the QS minor approaches the study of sexuality in relation to the social construction of gender, race, ability, class, and citizenship.

The proposed minor will be administered by the Women's and Gender Studies Program, although twenty-four faculty members from a wide array of departments are listed as participating educators. Committed to critical thinking and social analysis, the QS minor introduces students not only to the complex histories, cultures, political activities, and expressions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender people, but it also raises questions about institutionalization and normalization of social practices and discourses.

Many universities have instituted queer studies programs including Duke University, the University of California at Berkeley, UCLA, Cornell University, the University of Massachusetts, Brown University, Brandeis University, Yale University, and Stanford University.

"The queer minor is consistent with the UO Diversity Plan's six-point effort to enhance diversity and to be responsive to the needs of a wide-ranging community," said core faculty

member Elizabeth Reis, associate professor of history. "It can provide the space for the deeper, honest conversations needed to achieve the goals of the plan as well the university's commitment to multicultural competence."

Reis sees the new queer studies minor as a program that will help students examine the ways in which sexual minorities have produced cultures, communities, and histories that challenge their supposed pathology and marginality. "Their voices and stories have long been neglected by traditional scholarship," Reis said.

"A minor in queer studies should be viewed as an enhancement to a bachelor's degree, something that will give our graduates a competitive edge in seeking employment," said Ellen Scott, director of the Women and Gender Studies Program.

In Oregon, a growing number of municipalities have enacted domestic partnership legal status for same-sex couples and families, leading to a need for individuals with expertise in the fields of human resources, legal counseling, and political activism. In addition, a growing number of professions, such as journalism, education, social services, counseling, and the health professions, seek graduates with expertise in LGBTQ issues.

"This proposal for a minor in queer studies expressly responds to student demand for courses on topics connected to this field, such as transgender history, sexualities, and gay legal issues," said Scott.

The queer studies minor is currently under review by the University Committee on Courses, and WGS expects to have the minor in place by fall 2008.

Taking It on the Road: CSWS Road Scholars Program

Busting through the walls of the proverbial ivory tower of academia, the CSWS Road Scholars lecture program takes cutting edge research on women and culture “on the road” to communities across Oregon. The Road Scholars program is entering its fifth year of offering conversations on issues critical to the lives, health, social standing, and history of women to any community or academic group. This public lecture series has reached more than thirty venues across Oregon. The hosting groups, including libraries, community colleges, civic groups, and museums, can bring a Road Scholar presenter to enhance an event or invigorate lifetime learning opportunities.

Three years of the traveling lecture program was made possible by a generous gift from Robert Amundson, Ph.D., in memory of his wife Joy Belsky. Joy was a field researcher and scholar of the plant ecology of grazed ecosystems of tropical savannas who rose to national prominence in a male-dominated field.

Last year topics ranged from historical studies such as *Soldaderas: Female Mexican Revolutionary Figures* to a study of the contemporary cultural in *Martha Stewart and the Tradition of Domestic Advice*. The UO faculty members and researchers associated with the CSWS program have found the Road Scholars program a fulfilling venue to share their favorite

topics with diverse audiences.

The satisfaction that comes from reaching traditional as well as nontraditional students outside the university setting is what attracted Marcela Mendoza (anthropology) to apply to the Road Scholars program. Her lecture, *Latino Women and Families: The Integration of the New Immigrants*, approached the topic of Mexican immigrants in Tennessee through the lens of her own experience as an immigrant woman from Latin America.

Mendoza’s presentations given in Pendleton last year received an enthusiastic response from the audience. “It’s a personal challenge to communicate the ideas that you care about in an effective manner, particularly with audiences that are not there ‘for the credits,’” said Mendoza. One student said he was motivated to apply to the UO for furthering his education, inspired by the research being done at CSWS.

Previous hosts of Road Scholars have consistently requested these speakers for multiple years because, in the words of one library host, “It was both entertaining and enjoyable . . . I’m so impressed with the overall quality.”

The benefits go both ways. Dianne Dugaw (English) had already experienced taking her research on the road as an active lecturer on the Oregon Chautauqua Program circuit of the Oregon Council for the Humanities. She applied for the CSWS Road Scholars program at its inception because she found the interaction with the audiences added an unexpected element of stimulation to her own knowledge.

Dianne explained, “I love talking to people about the importance of these

eclipsed aspects of women’s history. The audiences always relate to it and have great comments that help me stay connected to the importance of my work.”

Kathryn Lynch (environmental studies) tours her presentation entitled *Wild Connections: Women Foragers, Wildcrafters and Artisans* that explores wild plant gathering traditions across the United States. Lynch said, “I enjoyed the interactions with the audience members, particularly the rich discussions around the display table at the end of every presentation. My display probably has over 200 plant species represented, and I love to bring out all these items. It is a very powerful way to demonstrate the human relationship and interdependence with wild plants.”

CSWS will soon be accepting applications for the Road Scholars program for 2008–9. Please contact Peggy McConnell, peggym@uoregon.edu, (541) 346-2262, for more information on hosting an event, becoming a Road Scholar, or donating to this outstanding program.

CSWS Research Grant Deadlines

All CSWS faculty and graduate student research grant applications are due February 4, 2008, by 5:00 p.m. Go to csws.uoregon.edu/grants/ for more information and to download applications. Call (541) 346-5015 if you have questions.

Winter 2008 Events

UNLESS INDICATED, EVENTS ARE HELD FROM NOON TO 1:00 P.M. IN THE JANE GRANT ROOM, 330 HENDRICKS HALL, 1408 UNIVERSITY STREET. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ALL THE EVENTS, CONTACT CSWS, (541) 346-5015.

JANUARY 16: “Confessions of a Queer-spawn—Writing Humorous Memoir on Serious Social Issues,” Melissa Hart, adjunct instructor, School of Journalism and Communication

FEBRUARY 6: “Squaw: Discourse, Stereotypes, and Indigenous Women,” Debra

Merskin, associate professor, School of Journalism and Communication

FEBRUARY 20: “When Flags Flew High: Propaganda, Memory and Oral History for World War II Female Veterans,” Kathleen Ryan, graduate teaching fellow, School of Journalism and Communication

MARCH 5: “The Reproduction of Inequality: The Social Organization of Work at Large Scale Development Projects,” Yvonne Braun, assistant professor, Department of Sociology

MARCH 10: “Mexican Immigration in Oregon: Gender and Family Issues”

Panel: Lynn Stephen, professor, Department of Anthropology, and Heather McClure, research associate, Oregon Social Learning Center, 3:30 p.m., Browsing Room, Knight Library, 1501 Kincaid Street. Reception follows.

MARCH 12: “Sex, Style and War: Aesthetics and Politics in Post 9/11 America,” Bonnie Mann, assistant professor, Department of Philosophy



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Women Defending the Plaza: Gender, Citizenship, and the Politics of Place

By Lise Nelson,
Assistant Professor, Geography

In December 1988 the church bells rang in the Purhépechan indigenous community of Cherán, located on a high plateau in the western Mexican state of Michoacán. Residents of Cherán rushed to the plaza to “defend the community (*el pueblo*)” and rid themselves of entrenched and “corrupt” authorities of a political party (the PRI—*Partido de la Revolución Institucional*) that had been in power since the 1930s. After more than six years of severe economic crisis, and after witnessing a leftist presidential candidate they supported officially lose the national election—despite evidence of widespread fraud—residents of Cherán had had enough. Protesters forcibly removed the PRI municipal president, gathered in the plaza to elect a “popular” municipal president, and occupied the plaza for ten months to “defend” the popular municipal presidency.

These mobilizations transformed how men and women in Cherán conceptualized citizenship, political authority, and the public sphere. They were particularly profound experiences for women, who had to cross a deeply ingrained gender power divide



Purhépechan woman of Cherán, defender of el pueblo in 1988, selling herbs gathered in the forest (taken by L. Nelson in 1999)

to arrive at the plaza and find their political voice. The majority of women who participated in 1988 were illiterate, had never voted, and did not understand the key functions of the municipal government. Extended time in the plaza taught participants new vocabularies for reconceptualizing the nature of political authority. The most important moment for women in particular was when they put themselves in front of the men in order to avoid violence as the community confronted federal police sent to restore the political status quo.

Afterwards, women adopted the discourse that they had “defended *el pueblo*.” Given that the notion of “*el pueblo*” is the central symbol

of ethnic community and political legitimacy in Cherán, women’s new position as “defenders of *el pueblo*” transformed them into legitimate political actors and enabled them to claim unprecedented political agency long after the protests had passed.

The contested elections of 1988 foreshadowed other key political moments that emerged subsequently in Mexican history, such as the Zapatista uprising in 1994 and the PRI’s loss of the presidency in 2000. A fine-grained portrait of indigenous women’s experiences and interpretations of this national political upheaval, and the complicated ways these experiences reshaped their political practices over time, provide an important place to begin thinking about empowerment and democracy in contemporary Mexico.

My 2008–9 sabbatical will be devoted to completing the book manuscript based on this research, *Women Defending the Plaza: Gender, Citizenship, and the Politics of Place* (under contract with University of Arizona Press). Parts of this project have been published in the *Journal of Latin American Geography* (2006), *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (2006), and *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (2003).