

BOX 2.2 FEMINIST ARCHAEOLOGY

Though gender and sexuality have been explored by other academic disciplines since the 1950s and 1960s, archaeologists did not begin investigating these topics until the early 1980s. It was at this time that female archaeologists who saw themselves as feminists started questioning why archaeologists were so hesitant and late to study gender issues.

Feminist archaeology pioneers like Dr. Joan Gero, formerly of American University, and Dr. Margaret Conkey, professor of archaeology at the University of California, Berkeley, wrote seminal publications exploring two central problems in archaeology: (i)

the representation of females and gender dynamics in the past, and (ii) gender bias and discrimination in the discipline of archaeology.

Through this work, which is known as first-wave feminist archaeology, archaeologists identified how women in the past were often depicted as passive, inactive people who were solely responsible for birthing and raising children (Conkey and Spector 1984). Men, in contrast, were depicted as active, productive members of society who constructed homes, foraged and hunted for food, and made stone tools. Feminist archaeologists challenged these androcentric