

**AN INTERVIEW WITH A SOUTHERN COLORADO FEMALE CATTLE RANCHER:
INSIGHTS INTO SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT, GENDER EQUALITY, AND
CONSERVATION EASEMENT DESIGNATIONS**

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By

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Abstract

This article is an interview based analysis of a Southern Colorado, Female Cattle Rancher, Betsy Brown. It specifically focuses on three elements of her life: her experience with sustainable land management practices, her experience with gender equality within the cattle ranching profession, and her insight into conservation easement land designations. The conclusions of the study are that Betsy Brown heavily invests in sustainable land management curriculum as it pertains to how she manages her own ranching activity. She states that her relationship to increased feelings of gender equality in her workplace, career as well as in her marriage stem from sustainable land management principles. Betsy Brown also connects holistic management principles she has invested in to explain her approval and personal endorsement of conservation easement land designations. These narrative conclusions are analyzed under the lenses of cultural ecology and Marxist-feminism theory to position Betsy Brown's personal history within academic discussions on sustainability, gender equality, and conservation.

Introduction

This is an interview with a 75 year old female cattle rancher, Betsy Brown, who still actively manages and ranches the land of the historic 3R Ranch in Beulah, Colorado. Betsy Brown and her husband, Reeves Brown, have presided over the ranch for close to 40 years, becoming the longest tenants of a ranch whose history in southern Colorado stretches back to the early pioneers. Betsy Brown refers to the ranch as her life's work. At 75 years of age she is the primary cattle rancher and 3R's business director. Sharp and full of indestructible grit, Betsy Brown represents a dying era of small cattle ranching operations.

Betsy Brown is an important figure within conversations of sustainability and female empowerment. Her tenure as a cattle rancher who understands sustainable land management principles and how best to implement them, a lifetime struggle to achieve equality in a male dominated field, and her knowledge of conservation easements makes her voice and insight of indisputable value. All of these experiences create a priceless wealth a knowledge, one that represents a great loss to history if not carefully archived and referenced for its relevance in present day conversations.

This work seeks to archive her voice and experience for hope that it will be referenced and revered for all the years these conversations of sustainable land management and gender equality remain relevant and contended. The following ethnographic research is threefold. The first research question asks Betsy Brown to describe her experience with sustainable land management practices. The second questions seeks to understand what her experience has been with gender equality in the cattle ranching profession. Lastly, this thesis seeks to understand why Betsy Brown endorses and chooses to engage in conservation easement land designations.

This ethnographic interview is a source of knowledge creation. The interview creates previously unpublished knowledge for southern Colorado's historical record, adds narrative data on the female experience with gender equality in agricultural work, and adds narrative data on the human motives for conservation easement designations. Prepared alongside this Thesis work is a complete set of scanned documents spanning 3R Ranch's History. These documents have been granted access by Betsy and Reeves Brown.

The research in detail represents a key addition to southern Colorado's historical record, an area where few modern ethnographies have been produced and archived. The 3R Ranch where Betsy and Reeves Brown reside and manage represents a true gem to the history of Beulah, Colorado. This research will highlight and archive the historical value of the 3R Ranch for the community of Beulah to study and refer to. This complete narrative data and historical archival document set also gives back to the larger community of Southern Colorado by cementing 3R Ranch's regional position of power and purpose in the history of Southern Colorado.

In addition, this research is a key addition to the archived narratives of the female experience, particularly the female struggle to achieve gender equality in an agricultural field such as cattle ranching. There are very few articles produced that focus on the experience of gender equality in cattle ranching in the American West (Wilmer and Fernández-Giménez, 2016). This represents a great academic loss and a dangerous form of societal neglect. Lastly, this research provides narrative insight into conservation easement designation decisions. Previously, very few if any academic articles have been produced that include a narrative study of motivations for conservation easement designations. This study contributes to today's

contentious conversations regarding the positives and negatives of these conservation easement land designations.

Background

Not unlike most careers in America, women have long battled to be recognized as leaders on ranches. It has only been in recent years that there have been noticeable changes in the number of women recognized as the principal producer on a ranch. The USDA defines a principal producer as the person primarily responsible for the day to day management of the farm (Bufkin, 2019). According the 2017 Census of Agriculture, a little more than 36 percent of American principle producers were women (United States Department of Agriculture, 2019). This represents a five percent increase from 2012 meaning in the span of five years 500,000 more women became the principle producer on their ranches (Bufkin, 2019). This increase in female representation in the historically male dominated field of agricultural production represents a highly important societal shift as it pertains to women's equal treatment, pay, involvement, and overall recognition in this field (Wilmer and Fernández-Giménez, 2016). This increase in representation within agriculture stands to inspire other women seeking to find their power and voice in similar long standing, male dominated fields.

Also central to this study is the rise in popularity of sustainable land management practices that strive to restructure highly destructive land use activities such as ranching. All over the world, cattle ranching represents a massive ecological threat as it clears native forests to make way for cattle (Walker et. al, 2008). Especially in places like the Amazon rainforest, ranching has caused immeasurably high levels of biological loss (Walker et. al, 2008). In the United States, two fifths of all land is farmland. This equates to 915 million acres of land and 2.1

million farms and ranches (United States Department of Agriculture, 2014). The staggering amount of land heavily used for agriculture puts into perspective the level of overused and degraded land in the United States (United States Department of Agriculture, 2014). It is because of this historical land devastation that many ranchers have sought out alternative, sustainable, and regenerative land management practices. Betsy Brown's experience with sustainable land management has transformed her ranching activity to align with a popular land management curriculum known as Holistic Management. Holistic Management was founded in 1984 in Africa by Alan Savory who created the curriculum largely based around planned grazing for cattle. The planned grazing strives to mimic natural grazing and grass regeneration by cycling cattle through specific plots of land, instead of letting cattle over graze and destroy the land (Savory and Butterfield, 1999). Holistic Management's larger goals consist of widespread conservation of grasslands, biomes that serve as a carbon sink for excess CO₂ in the atmosphere to ultimately positively impact climate change activity (Savory and Butterfield, 1999). Since its founding, Holistic Management has gained a large following in the United States, particularly in the western states (Savory and Butterfield, 1999). Ranchers in the west have long battled the lasting and negative effects of desertification that occur when grasslands have been over grazed by cattle (Savory, 1983). Betsy Brown testifies to this struggle and provides her own narrative experience with Holistic Management.

Different from Holistic Management, a recent extension of the sustainable land management movement has turned to the law to legally declare private land as conservation locations. These legally binding declarations, known as conservation easements, enter private land into contracts that outline restrictions for land use in order to conserve land and the resources found on it (Rissman et. al, 2007). Many private land owners in the western United

States have partnered with land trusts to submit their productive land into large scale conservation landscapes (Rissman et. al, 2007). The popularity of conservation easements comes hand in hand with private citizens taking a deep interest in the future and sustainability of their land. Recent academic conversations on the topic have wondered at the personal intent behind declaring private land a conservation easement. Intent behind why one individual may choose to ease their private land remains largely unregulated (Merenlender et. al, 2004). An aspect of easements that make them attractive to land owners is the tax break incentive granted by the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) to promote charitable donations of land for conservation (Halperin, 2011). This article addresses that question of intent by recording Betsy Brown's answers to her experience with easements.

There is a great loss to the world if small, family operated cattle ranches fall to the past, their knowledge, expertise, and experiences never recorded. But more alarming, there is an even greater loss if the world lets the already few, small, female operated cattle ranches fall to extinction without taking notice and without stopping to revel in the knowledge and life experience central to understanding today's conversations on sustainable land management and gender equality in agricultural careers. Therefore, Betsy Brown's relationship to sustainable agriculture, gender equality in the workplace, and conservation easements provide unparalleled insight.

Research Design

This research article is framed as a narrative analysis of an interview with Betsy Brown. The narrative analysis seeks to create knowledge with Betsy Brown's personal narrative and to organize her dialogue into three thematic questions. The research has been designed in this way

in order to allow for a deep analysis of Betsy Brown's narrative data. The narrative data will then be analyzed using two anthropological theories. The purpose of applying theory is to position Betsy Brown's experience within two larger academic conversations in Anthropology. In addition, through the application of theory, this work is put into direct conversation with other Anthropological research of varying interview based topics and subjects that use theory in a similar way.

Problems Addressed by Research.

To reiterate, the problems this research addresses and gives voice too are the 1) current lack of archived interviews produced in the southern Colorado region, 2) current lack of academic articles that focus on female cattle ranchers and their experience with gender equality and, 3) lack of articles written exploring intent through narrative data behind conservation easement designations.

Methodology

This interview based research was conducted over the span of 5 months. During this time Betsy Brown was asked to answer questions about her life that were then organized into three main research themes. The findings of this article connect Betsy Brown's answers to the three themes. The analysis also connects Betsy Brown's testimony to applications of Anthropological theory and other interview based research that relies on similar employments of theory. The narrative data included in this article represents fully stated portions of her personal dialogue. The dialogue is framed by a brief statement that introduces the transcript to follow by highlighting important anecdotes for later analysis. This style was chosen in order to guide readers through the narrative data and to constantly remind readers of the research objectives.

The transcription was performed by hand, recording Betsy Brown's words from two separate semi-structured interviews.

Anthropological Theory

Central to the analysis of this work are two relevant theories in Anthropology : 1) Cultural Ecology and 2) Marxist-Feminism. Cultural Ecology is defined as the study of the role of culture as a dynamic component of any ecosystem of which humans are a part (Frake, 1962). More so, Cultural Ecology notes that in any environment humans are found, human beings carve their own ecological niches with cultural tools rather than using biological specializations (Frake, 1962). Meaning that as ecological niches continue to be carved out by humans over time, human's not only shape surrounding biomes but also reshape human cultural knowledge regarding the equipment we use to make these niches (Frake, 1962). Meaning in a broad sense, that Cultural Ecology is closely linked to examining the history and evolution of cultural activity in an area, alongside examining how these cultural shifts affect the biotic ecosystem (Frake, 1962). Cultural Ecology is the most applicable theoretical framework for analyzing two of the three themes Betsy Brown's narrative discusses. Those themes being the analysis of her relationship to sustainable agriculture and her relationship to conservation easements. Both sustainable agriculture and conservation easements are examples of human on environment niche building that continues to evolve over the course of time.

The second Anthropological theory, Marxist-Feminism, is defined as a framework not rooted in questions of identity, agency, authenticity, space or body but instead rooted in the oppression and the exploitation of the working class (Mojab and Zia, 2018). This theoretical framework affirms how capitalization and modernization have bolstered traditional patriarchal

gender relations (Mojab and Zia, 2018). While challenged for privileging exploitation over social and cultural oppression, Marxist-Feminism's main project is to not engage in a trade between class and gender (Mojab and Zia, 2018). Meaning, Marxist-feminism seeks to elevate female voices for their integral value, regardless of their class status. value is central to Betsy Brown's testimony as a female in an middle class agricultural career.

Preview of Structure

The remaining sections of this article represent narrative data, narrative data analysis, and conclusions. The narrative data section will provide the raw dialogue of Betsy Brown organized under the three research objectives in the form of a question and answer transcript. The data analysis section of the paper will dive beyond Betsy Brown's words to connect her answers to the larger themes being discussed, aided by applications of Cultural Ecology and Marxist-Feminist theory. The analysis section will place Betsy Brown's narrative into conversation with the two Anthropological theories and other anthropological research.

Narrative Data

The results of this ethnographic work are portions of Betsy Brown's personal narrative presented here in transcript form. Below, the presentation of Betsy Brown's personal narrative has been organized into three themes that address the three main research goals of this study: 1) What is your experience with sustainable land management? 2) What is your experience with gender equality in an agricultural career? And 3) What is your intent behind supporting conservation easements? This choice directly reflects the importance of Betsy Brown's dialogue as a means for analysis.

Relationship to Sustainable Land Management Personal Narrative

Turning to look specifically at Betsy Brown's success with Allan Savory's Holistic Resource Management curriculum, the narrative data she provided represents an important addition to current conversations debating the relative success of Holistic Resource Management. Betsy Brown's endorsement of the land management curriculum provides insight that has the power to encourage ranchers that have yet to partake in sustainable land use practices to reconsider their lacking involvement.

Transcript

Madison Wilkinson: So when did you first start ranching?

Betsy Brown: Oh my grandfather about the time I was in Middle School he let me start buying cattle and putting them in his feed lot and he didn't charge me for the feed which was very nice considerable money on them and maybe soon after that he started letting me buy cows for myself and putting them on a ranch that he had leased out 50 miles from Lubbock -

M: And this is in Texas yes?

B: Yeah, yeah. So I started accumulating a little cow herd.

...

M: What makes you call 3R Ranch your life's work? Is there anything you can say on that?

B: Oh sure. I feel that it's my privilege to get to take care of the ranch. I really truly truly feel that it's a privilege. I don't feel ownership of it in the way that some people do but I feel like for the time being- and by the way I'm sure you'll love this when you're trying to use this data and you hear pots and pans and all- but uh I feel it's my privilege to get to live here and to get to take

care of it. But I don't feel possessiveness of it. So I - we started back in the mid 80's going to the classes- Holistic Resource Management- and they started just really helped changed our method for grazing and understanding inter personal relationships and uh I think it was through those classes that I really realized how much we could do for the land here. Rather than just use it we could improve it...

B: We haven't done it right recently but we used to do it a lot of classes for the school kids. For college people too. And there was this one little boy that came I think they were 5th graders at the school in Beulah and boy he really got into it everything Reeves said he was taking in. Just all for it. And he went home and told his dad that he was ranching wrong and that he needed to tell him how to change. Oh my gosh! Fortunately his dad was a good sport.

M: I really admire this. Because I think that if more people were stewards of the land like you are then there would not be the same kind of issues that do exist in agriculture today.

B: Yes well this holistic resource management, are you familiar with it at all?

M: No

B: Ok well back in the 70's this man named Allen Savory who was from Zimbabwe in Africa he just graduated from college and was disgusted with ranchers they were just ruining the land and he just hated it. He was a wildlife biologist. And he noticed though that as he was going about and working for the big wildlife parks in Zimbabwe and then in South Africa how it really was great how the wildlife parks were growing because of the animals because of the cats mostly were herded into groups and they moved on they ate and they moved, they ate and they moved. And it just dawned on him that we could do the same thing with ranches. They don't have to just stay which has been so true worldwide that cattle just stayed and stayed and so they just really abused and the grasses became less good because they were abused to death. And so he in Africa you know labor

is so cheap and so he started having people herd the animals and he was getting the same results that the wildlife parks were. So he ended up with a price on his head from the president of Zimbabwe and he always kept his airplane full of fuel because he knew one of these days he was going to have to run. And he did and he decided ultimately to come to the US because he thought that if that idea is perpetuated in the United States, then the world will respect it...So in Albuquerque he started this center for teaching this and [we] just came away convinced and started practicing what he taught.

M: How did you hear about these classes? What peaked your interest in the first place?

B: Well they were written about and advertised in a magazine called the New Mexico stockman and it just sounded right to Reeves and me both and we talked to a good friend of ours that had already gone to the classes and he said well I'll watch your ranch because if you don't go together the other one will just want to kill the one that did go. And we were sold on it. And the thing we did to improve our grazing was to section off our property into a hundred acre by hundred acre fences and uh then the cows you know were all in one herd and then they just moved about the ranch slowly. You know they ate the grass and then they moved and it really was amazing how soon we say.

M: Have you written anything about your own holistic approach here for other people?

B: Well we've done classes. That's actually when we built this house we built a great big garage and finished it on the inside so that it would make a good classroom. Put windows and heaters in it and all. So it's been fun to share it's been interesting and most of the universities in their agriculture schools have now accepted this curriculum. It's been slow cause professors don't like to change real quick. There's peer pressure and that makes it even harder.

M: I am so amazed and fascinated by your love of the land. Was there any event that made you say “this is how it should be. We should be stewards of the land.”?

B: I think it was just kind of a passion because I loved ranching so much and I just wanted to make the ranch better. Then when we learned how to make it better that gave us freedom to pursue.

...

M: My next question is what do you really want people to know about ranching? When you are teaching people what do you tell people first?

B: Probably two things. Particularly one how they can make the land better how they can graze to improve the grasses and get more soil cover more litter on the ground and soil is really it is the thing right now. Nationwide farmers ranchers everybody is all into soils right now. And then the other thing is and this is what we really learned in some great classes at the Center for Holistic Management is personal relationships - people to people relationships. Whether it's your employee or your husband or your wife, your child and I really needed that because I was pretty shy. And Reeves is not shy [laughs] and so he ran over me really good and being you know from an old Texas family the guys thought it was their privilege and their right to be dominating and domineering and ohhh my gosh the classes were painful my stomach up tight but I really grew. And it was fun to watch other people there because they were kinda going through the same thing I was. So. So those two things.

M: What would you tell people about 3R and about your experience here? What would you want people to know about what you've done with the land and your relationship with the land here.

B: Well. When we first came here it was just gramma grass which is a real short grass and it was basically a gramma grass ranch. And after we started practicing the holistic resource

management we went from 16 acres a cow - that what it took to feed a cow per year - hay and everything all tidied up together. And after we practiced it a few years we got it down to 7.6 acres per cow. Because all these grasses that were here they were amidst piles of cactus and rocks or whatever. They were here. And when they had opportunity to have rest then they just scattered everywhere. And it was the coolest thing. First I noticed the wheat grass came and it's about a six inch tall grass and it was funny it came in areas and it looked just like a bathtub and then you know other grasses begin to show up and it was you know exciting.

M: It's exciting!

B: Right. And it is like I am doing a service for the land. I'm making it better. Then when Mother Nature gives us real serious droughts we go backwards. So it's been pretty dry since 2000.

M: Ok. So has that been a constant struggle?

B: Oh yes! Actually two times since 2000 we moved our cows away from the ranch because there's no way and it would have just damaged the country to have kept them here. The first time we took them to south central Oklahoma. And then the second time in 2013 we moved with them and took them to a feed lot down south of La Junta. Totally had them in a feed lot for 6 months and the cows hated it. Oh they hated it.

...

M: When people ask you about 3R what do you want them to take away as the thing you are most proud of?

B: Taking care of the land. Yeah. Taking care of the cattle and the land. It is amazing. Madison, how many ranchers just turn cows and get them in and then turn them back out. It's not an emotional attachment. I mean they're both kinds. Certainly. Tons of other people who love it as much as I do. But there are too many people yet who don't. And some of the children of those

people we know will say we just have to wait until grandfather or father passes away and then we can change for the better. But [they] can't change now because [grandfather or father] is in charge. They just don't have a passion for it. It's just how they make a living. How they pay their bills.

Relationship to Gender Equality in Agriculture Narrative

Betsy Brown's narrative testimony of her experience as a female in a predominantly male dominated field, provides a significant narrative addition to southern Colorado's historical archives that currently lack in female rancher narrative and insight. Betsy Brown testifies that respect from male counterparts became the most crucial marker for empowerment and opportunity in her journey to be recognized as a capable rancher and owner of a business regardless of her gender. This archived insight seeks to encourage female representation in ranching as well as other agricultural careers during a time where more and more women are becoming principal producers of farms and ranches.

Transcript

Madison Wilkinson: I wanted to start with your draw to ranching. When I first met you, you said that you had always wanted to ranch and I just wanted to hear a little bit more about your experience and who inspired you to get into this field.

Betsy Brown: Ok well my two favorite people were my grandparents, my mother's parents, and my grandmother was just wonderful, civic minded, she had been a school-teacher and so forth. But she was very inspiring and pushing to her granddaughter who loved her. And then the grandfather was a rancher and a banker and he had that Texaco gasoline thing. But he took me with him from the time I was two and that's kinda special and unusual for a man to do that. But

we went through the process of going to all the different businesses and then we went to the ranch and that's what he really loved and that's what I loved to. I was his little shadow and he was so wonderful about not saying you can't do this. There was never you can't do this, especially you can't do this because you're a girl and he never did that. And you know, you think of those times, which of course were a few years ago, and that was really good for me. Because my father never said you can or you should. Anytime he'd ever say anything was "Oh that was a good peach pie you made" something like that. Definitely women's work was women's work and yeah. So when I was four years old I definitely made my decision that I was going to be a rancher. And I looked at other things but it always fell by the wayside.

M: When you started ranching was your father proud?

B: No! No, no, no. No he fought us on it. And explained to us that it was such a stupid way to have your money invested. You could make a lot more money other ways. But that wasn't my goal. Unfortunately it wasn't Reeve's goal either. But it worked out.

...

M: Are there many female ranchers that you have encountered?

B: A whole lot more than there were. There's getting to be a lot of women in agriculture in farming and in ranching.

M: Does that excite you?

B: It does. It does because it's been a fight for me to be respected. You know people call and they just asked to speak to Reeves. And it's kinda fun for him because he'll say "Oh well you'll have to ask Betsy, she takes care of the cows". And you know he's made a huge amount of progress in respecting me and what I do rather than just expecting me to be the worker.

M: So it wasn't always this way?

B: Oh no! Oh no, oh no. No we have both grown and we have both learned to appreciate what the other one does and what their because he has his skills set which is more toward the farming and mine is the cows and the office. Gotta keep the office under control.

...

M: Between you and Reeves, when was the moment that you said, “We are equal partners in this,” and he respected that?

B: Yeah, so it's two different times. We were equal partners first, because I really contributed more dollars to the ranch purchases and you know, I was just as much on the line with the debt as he was. But it was a long... it was decades before he gave in and mellowed out. And quite a few sessions with a psychologist.

M: Just talking about..?

B: Just hammering through his head that just because he was male, he did not have the privilege, that did not give you the privilege of being in charge.

M: Right. Wow. Was there a moment this was agreed on or was it just over time?

B: I think time and I wore him down. And there was this one little self-help book that I read that ding-ding-ding finally in my head. Okay. He's not going to back off. You're just going to have to step up and put your foot down. And it was a whole winter of... It was kind of a rough winter, marriage-wise because I just kept --

M: Saying no?

B: I said no a billion times.

B: And it's not perfect yet. But he's mellowed a great deal, and just little reminders kind of get him straightened out.

...

B: In the mid-80s, we went to Holistic Resource Management classes. And one of the classes

was just on human relationships, because that's one of the things they saw was that ranch families had so much trouble... farm and ranch families had so much trouble with family. Generational, husband/wife, children. The whole thing was a mess. That was one of the hardest things I went through ever. I was just exhausted every night because I wasn't good at expressing my feelings about things, and they made me do it. And that was good for me. I needed it badly. And it was interesting to watch all of the other people in that class. It was just exhausting and tears and all sorts of things that went on that week.

B: But we made big strides. That was right at the same time that we were really learning how to manage the grass and the land. And so it was all kind of wadded up and given to us at one time... in a close time frame.

B: But we were still just creeping on relationships. But we were doing really good on managing the land. That was a piece of cake in comparison.

...

M: If you had one bundle of advice for a female rancher trying to get her footing what would it be?

B: Just jump in and be totally a part of the business from morning to night. It's a lot of work, but it's worth it. It's also satisfying to be a part of management.

...

M: What do you think is the greatest benefit to having equal partnerships in land managing families?

B: Better decisions. Because you bounce them off of each other. You talk about them. You put together a little of this idea and a little of that until you have probably a whole that is healthier, better.

M: Do you think that better decision making equals better land managing practices?

B: Oh, yes. Yes.

...

M: What is the largest piece to feeling equal in your career?

B: I think it's respect, respect, respect. I think it'd be real hard to have equality without respect.

M: When your generation looks at this generation of younger land managers, what do you see as the greatest difference between the two generations?

B: Well, just the first thing that pops into my head is that you probably have to fight a lot less for respect.

M: Definitely.

B: Equality.

Relationship to Conservation Easements Narrative

Betsy Brown's description of her intent behind placing her land into a conservation easement based on the desire to insure the long-term preservation of sustainable ranching and conservation of water resources provides important insight for the public that is grappling with private land becoming strictly regulated. However, Betsy Brown's experience is singular and does not provide an answer for why others in mass have chosen to submit their land into binding and strict contracts. Betsy Brown's testimony instead serves to encourage a new academic lens for discussing conservation easements as well as serves to encourage other academic articles to explore individual intent for easing properties. This would continue to provide key answers to the current conversation that wonders at the intent behind conservation easements and seeks to regulate the rise in eased properties to insure real conservation benefits.

Transcript

Madison Wilkinson: So this property is in a conservation easement, correct?

Betsy Brown: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

M: Can you just walk me through that process? How you learned about easements and what you guys were talking about and deciding when you decided to have this be eased? I just think that they're very fascinating.

B: Well the state of Colorado made a legislative decision to encourage conservation easements with tax credits. And the tax credits really helped me because conservation easements are pretty expensive to put on your land, although I think they're fixing to restructure it and make it much less financially painful.

B: So you have to do a baseline study... or have a baseline study done and a minerals study done. And then you have to... There's a perfect word for this. Give to the conservation easement holding entity, which we use Colorado Open Lands out of Denver. You have to give... endow them with dollars so that they forever have enough dollars to come once a year and inspect and make sure you're behaving.

B: Okay. And then, if they ever had to go to court to make something right, whole, whatever, then they need some dollars to be able to do that. Oh and then the lawyer. The lawyer wants a lot of dollars for helping you.

M: I'm sure.

B: And I think that's it. So those are the things. So it's a pretty expensive. The last one we put on, we put it on in sections. The last one was like \$64,000.

B: But then you get these tax credits-

M: That pay you back for it?

B: Yeah.

...

B: It had always bothered Reeves and me that the next generation to own the ranch might break it up and sell it just because it's kind of a pretty area. So when conservation easements became

known... at least in the west. I think they had been back in the east for some time. We thought ha ha, that's what we want to do. And as we get money from the tax credits that we sell, those goes into a savings... We choose to put them in a savings account for the ranch so that if it has a crisis, it has a little backup. And we bought a couple smaller pieces of adjoining property or something or even one of them that was within our boundaries. So that's nice to have that, be able to do it. Comforting.

M: So in the contract that you created for it, what does it say? Will this always remain agricultural land?

B: Yeah. Forever, supposedly. I mean, it's kind of hard... you know, our government could do something and poof it away. Supposedly, it will forever remain agriculture. Never be subdivided. The water never taken away from the land. And then there's some limitations like... We couldn't have like a racetrack or go cart track or something like that.

...

M: So you've signed the easement, and it's done, completed?

B: Well, we did ours in pieces, because at the time as we were doing it, you couldn't get very much money from the state in tax credits. And so we did small segments, which nearly drove us and them crazy. We did ours with Colorado Open Lands out of Denver, but... No, you can do up to five million dollars a year, so-

B: But it's nothing. But anyway, all our land is done, some of our water's done, and the last of the irrigation water might get done this year if everybody kind of hustles.

B: So, I'm pleased we're as far as we are, and the rest will come, because you just can't handle the dry in Colorado, you cannot afford to take water off, and have anything left that's worth a

hoot.

B: Plus, they do the conservation easement at some farms, trying to keep the water tied. Tied, tied.

M: What are the terms of the easement that you've created?

B: The land will remain how it is today forever.

M: What does it mean to tie water to the land with an easement?

B: It means that the water can never be sold off, it can never be separated. They are mushed together.

M: Why is the easement so important to you both? What made you want to do this?

B: And just seeing all the development that's been happening in Colorado.

B: Just not wanting our land to be crisscrossed with 40 acre fences.

Narrative Analysis

The narrative testimony given by Betsy Brown above in response to the three research themes holds great significance towards understanding and adding previously unrecorded insight. Following the raw transcription data, this section seeks to reiterate key points made by Betsy Brown in response to each research objective and discuss the Anthropological implications of her voice and insight. The drawn Anthropological implications will be rooted in the application of two identified Anthropological theories: 1) Cultural Ecology and 2) Marxist-Feminism.

Specific to the analytical breakdown, the environmentalist based Anthropological theory of Cultural Ecology will be applied to two of the three narrative themes. Those themes being Betsy's relationship to Sustainable Land Management and Conservation Easement designations. Then specific points within Marxist- feminist anthropological theory will be applied to Betsy Brown's relationship to gender equality in the working class.

Betsy Brown and Sustainable Land Management Analysis

Betsy Brown shared that her pure respect for the land at 3R Ranch inspired her and her husband Reeves Brown to seek ways to manage it that would benefit the health and longevity of the soils and grasses. Betsy Brown shared her awareness of the environmental destruction that most unregulated ranching practices can do over time to rangeland. This awareness is significant towards changing a commonly held opinion in environmentalist circles that see ranchers as unthinking destroyers of the American west's rangeland (Sheridan, 2007). Betsy Brown instead represents a rancher that is taking full responsibility for the possible environmental impacts her livelihood produces and investing in sustainable land management. This narrative is minimally represented in mainstream media which represents a large issue and an opportunity lost for other ranchers not only in the western United States, but globally to unite around sustainable ranching options (Sheridan, 2007).

Betsy Brown's investment of sustainable land management practices can be analyzed under the theoretical framework of Cultural Ecology. As a theory, Cultural Ecology has been described as a methodological tool for understanding how the adaptation of a cultural group to its environment can entail change (Haenn and Wilk, 2006). In Frake's (1962) words, Cultural Ecology explains the process by which humans carve out biological niches with cultural tools to adjust the environment around them for their own benefit and use. Betsy Brown's life long career

in agriculture is a complete example of environmental niche carving with cultural tools. In her early career, Betsy Brown subscribed to traditional ranching activity that used heavy machinery, chemicals, and human directed cattle grazing methods that left the soils and grasses and larger watershed area degraded and inefficient. Over time, by acquiring new cultural knowledge interested in environmental sustainability, ecological conservation, and overall efficiency Betsy Brown changed the way that she herself carved out the land for her livelihood needs. By changing her cultural tools to more efficient and environmentally conscious methods, she was able to alter the land around her and allow for natural soil and grass regeneration that previously did not exist.

This analysis of Betsy Brown's relationship to sustainable land management relates to a previous study done incorporating personal history into an Anthropological analysis of human on environment interaction. The Shoreman-Oimet (2017) article argues that the relationship between humans and their local environment involves a study on motivation. The study uses segments of personal narratives as a methodological approach to understand how independent human motivation to access environmental knowledge can alter the way individuals and communities engage with the land around them. This study uses Culture Ecology theory similarly to Betsy Brown's narrative analysis.

Betsy Brown and Gender Equality in Agriculture Analysis

Betsy Brown provides a narrative testimony encapsulating her struggle to achieve mutual respect in her career based solely on her gender identification. This narrative struggle has been identified by fellow female ranchers previously in academic writing (Wilmer and Fernández-Giménez, 2016). Betsy Brown discusses the difficulty and the years of work it took to be

recognized as a leader on the 3R Ranch, representing a facet of research that is only recently beginning to develop (Wilmer and Fernández-Giménez, 2016). Much of the research on women in agriculture has been focused at the family-farm level (Sachs and Alston, 2010). At the community level, only recently has research been conducted to explore how women take leadership and governance roles in agriculture and forestry (Wilmer and Fernández-Giménez, 2016; Farmar-Bowers and Lane, 2010). The gendered challenges of rural life including access to educational opportunities as well as barriers to securing power in resource management, have been well explored and identified across disciplines and geographic locations (Wilmer and Fernández-Giménez, 2016; Pruitt, 2007; Meinzen-Dick and Zwartveen, 2001).

Betsy Brown's narrative also provides a link between sustainable land management interest and success due to increased gender equality within ranch management. The link is made when Betsy answers questions asking her what she believes the greatest benefit of equal partnerships in land managing families is with, "Better decisions. Because you bounce them off of each other. You talk about them. You put together a little of this idea and a little of that until you have probably a whole that is healthier. Better." This link directly speaks to previous academic research that has explored gender as an implication for environmental issues, not just related to rangelands, where social inequalities are reflected in natural resource management (Wilmer and Fernández-Giménez, 2016). There are two important ways gender inequalities are reflected in land management practices according to previous research (Wilmer and Fernández-Giménez, 2016). First, female perceptions of and efforts to address environmental issues through sustainable management practices have been seen to surpass those of men (Liu et al., 2014). A study done by Liu et al. (2014) found that female ranchers in Nevada had a greater concern for the effects of environmental issues such as climate change than their male counterparts. This

facet of research applies to Betsy Brown's personal narrative through the way that she takes independent initiative committing herself to respecting and caring for the land with sustainability in mind.

Secondly, gender has important implications for environmental issues through the work of feminist scholars who have rethought the privileging of male epistemologies in policy and decision making within environmental science (Wilmer and Fernández-Giménez, 2016). A study by Arora-Jonsson (2004) argues that differences between men and women's perception of environmental issues arise not only from prescribed gender roles but also from specific social contexts, networks, and relationships through which gender is performed (Wilmer and Fernández-Giménez, 2016). This existing research area is important to Betsy Brown's story because both her and her husband come to agree on sustainable land management principles as important. However, the prescribed gender roles present in a south-western United States context made it challenging to achieve feelings of gender equality within their partnership.

Betsy Brown's experience as a woman in a male dominated field can be analyzed with a Marxist-feminism approach. Marxist-feminism at its core affirms how capitalization and modernization have bolstered traditional patriarchal gender relations (Mojab and Zia, 2018). Marxist-feminism seeks to elevate female, working class narratives based on integral, human value. Betsy Brown's narrative as a female in agriculture who has experienced a lifelong fight for respect in her workplace fits into Marxist-feminist frameworks for two specific reasons. First, Betsy Brown's narrative privileges her integral value and grit as a worker over her class and gender status. Second, Betsy Brown's struggle against traditional patriarchal gender relations is at the core of her fight for respect as a leader and business owner on the ranch.

Betsy Brown and Conservation Easements Analysis

Currently, there are very few academic articles written that rely on narrative testimony for understanding the private intent and personal fulfillment behind declaring land under a legally binding conservation easement from the Southern Colorado context. This is problematic because over 20 million ha of land in the United States is protected by nonprofits and land trusts (Land Trust Alliance, 2014). According to Colorado Open Lands (2020), in Colorado alone there are currently over 510,000 acres of land protected under conservation easements. This work with Betsy Brown adds necessary narrative reasoning to the developing field of study around easements.

One previous study done by Horton et al. (2017), privileges interview data from private-landowners in Colorado that identified five dominant themes relevant to understanding intent behind conservation easement designations. The study found through qualitative interview analyses that landowners' motivation for completing conservation easements included all five themes: conservation, social and community, financial, personal and family, and legal and process. In other words, the main motivations by landowners to engage with conservation easements generally stem from a desire to protect the ecosystem, prevent development, and find financial gain through tax incentives. Landowners also reported that community involvement, social connections, and networking were unexpected benefits of a conservation easement and brought positive change to their livelihoods. Betsy Brown's testimony seamlessly fits into the thematic findings of the Horton et al. (2017) study. Particularly, Betsy discussed at length her motivation to protect the land from further degradation and development and to find financial benefit from the tax breaks given by the state of Colorado.

Betsy Brown's narrative intent behind conservation easements agrees with the interview findings of the Horton et al. (2017) study. This is important because similar to Horton et al. (2017), the results from this interview can be used to inform conservation strategies that more purposefully incorporate private landowner experiences with conservation easement planning. Additionally, understanding the impact of conservation easements on landowners' livelihoods and well-being will further advance conservation efforts on private lands in the future.

Similarly to Betsy Brown's investment in sustainability, Betsy's investment in conservation can also be analyzed under the theoretical framework of Culture Ecology. As discussed, Culture Ecology explains the process humans take to carve out niches in their environments for their own livelihood success. Culture Ecology also states that in order to carve out desired livelihood niches, humans use cultural tools and knowledge. Similar to Betsy Brown's adoption of sustainable land management, her interest in land conservation stems from being motivated by cultural knowledge. Cultural interest in land conservation creates a number of tools for people to ascribe to and utilize in order to change their land. Conservation Easement designations represent one of these cultural tools. Betsy Brown's investment in a Conservation Easement forever has altered her land by allowing it to exist as an agricultural ranch, barring it from further development.

Conclusions

Very little academic attention has been paid to female ranchers. This exclusion represents a massive loss of crucial experience and insight into the future of agriculture and the future of women as leaders in agriculture. Betsy Brown as an interview subject gives testimony to a life lived that will remain relevant for as long as the world seeks to find answers to its environmental

crisis and struggle for female opportunity and respect. Without archiving narratives like Betsy Brown's, the world each day loses potential answers to these large, all-consuming problems. Betsy Brown's voice helps to answer key questions around land management principles and practices and the potential of women in agricultural careers. Her narrative analysis provides new lenses for theoretical applications and the importance of human testimonial alongside data and statistical work.

This work's ultimate hope is to honor and archive Betsy Brown's life work at 3R Ranch. The information shared and explored within this article and its accompanying historical documents is to give back precious information to Betsy Brown and her family, the community of Beulah, Colorado, and to southern Colorado's historical record. It is with deep admiration and respect that this work has been created and it hopes to encourage similar interview analysis projects to join the conversation.

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