

# Cooperation & Collective Action

## Archaeological Perspectives

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## Agency and Collective Action

*Insights from North American Historical Archaeology*

DEAN J. SAITTA

The concept of human agency has been widely used in archaeology over the past twenty years, and especially in the last decade (for reviews see Barrett 2001; Dobres and Robb 2000; Dornan 2002; Johnson 1989; Knapp and van Dommelen 2008). Agency theories in archaeology developed, in part, as a corrective to the often bloodless models of social life and change produced by various systems-theoretical and other processual approaches. Their development has been a good thing for the discipline. Agency theories have put people back into culture along with the cognitive factors—for instance, the frameworks of meaning by which people assign significance to events and things—that inform and motivate their actions. They have moved us to think about the freedom or “relative autonomy” that individuals have to maneuver within cultural systems and structures of social power. They have reunited society with history. In so doing, agency theories have rediscovered a key insight of the older Boasian, culture history approach that dominated archaeological thinking before the advent of processual archaeology: that the particulars of local historical context are worth investigating for their own sake, rather than simply serving as fodder for sweeping evolutionary narratives driven by cultural laws.

Several scholars have emphasized that *individual* agency is just one particular form of agency, and that the autonomous individual exercising rational choice and free will is a relatively recent invention specific to modernity (e.g., Thomas 2000; Hodder and Hutson 2003). Thomas (2000), for example, argues

that humans always carry out their projects in the context of a concrete material world that includes other people. Thus, it is inadequate to consider human beings apart from the relationships in which they find themselves. Barrett (2001) agrees, noting that agency must include the operation of social collectives that extend beyond the individual's own body and lifespan. Indeed, Johannes Fabian (1994) has noted that human acting is always acting in company. Hodder (2004) helpfully suggests that agency, like power, is less a thing we possess than a capacity that we exercise. With Thomas, he sees the group as forming part of the resources used for individual agency, and thus views group behavior as another form of individual agency.

McGuire and Wurst (2002) push the critique of agency theory the farthest, from the standpoint of an explicitly activist archaeology that seeks to engage with the political present. They argue that theories of individual agency in postprocessual archaeology are as ideological as the cultural systems theories that preceded them. They identify the focus on the individual agent as a sustaining belief of modern capitalism. Capitalism depends for its survival on cultural processes that constitute people as free and unfettered individuals. Thus it works, through its cultural forms, to universalize this historically contingent idea. Where this ideology is internalized and taken for granted, it obscures the oppositional nature of class groupings and exploitation in society. It also produces the kind of self-serving "identity politics" that can fragment and debilitate collective movements for change. Thus, McGuire and Wurst find advocacy of individual agency models by scholars intending to use their research to challenge class, gender, and racial inequalities in the modern world to be misguided and contradictory. By embracing the logic, language, and symbolism of individual agency, activist scholars are in fact reinforcing that which they wish to critique. By projecting and universalizing that which is contingent, they help to propagate existing social relations. This notion of agency lacks transformative, emancipatory, and revolutionary potential (Harvey 1973).

These critiques are clear in suggesting that individuals are always and everywhere thoroughly enmeshed in a web of social relations. Collective action results from the shared consciousness or solidarity that defines a community of individuals. Such consciousness may be based in class, gender, ethnicity, race, age, physical ability, or some combination of these (and other) identities. People make history as members of social groups whose common consciousness derives from shared existential anxieties, political interests, and social relations. This perspective is evident in the current volume. Citing theorists from Marx through Giddens and Bourdieu, Roscoe (chapter 3) notes that humans are not just self-interested. Rather, they have multiple, specific interests. Such interests also have "lifetimes": some are situational, and others more enduring. Carballo (chapter 1) notes that the structure of collective action is contextual and "segmentary": groups of individuals who cooperate on the basis of certain interests in some settings are adversarial in others. This chapter, and the work reported within, respects the arguments of Carballo, Roscoe, and others. Further, to the extent

that particular interests and actions are traceable to larger forces like global capitalism, and to the extent that community is always a delicate relation between fluid processes of self-identification and relatively permanent associations like that between person and nation-state (Harvey 2000: 240), an archaeology of collective action needs grand narratives of the structural and long term as well as small narratives of lived moments (Hodder 1999: 147).

This chapter considers cases of collective action that have been investigated by North American historical archaeologists. The focus is on "bottom-up" efforts by politically and economically oppressed groups to resist the forces that produce their oppression. The touchstone is historical archaeology's great triumvirate of race, class, and gender—the key identities that, depending on circumstances, the particular social interests at stake, and the "durability" of those interests either integrate or divide groups of individuals in society. In all cases material culture is understood as playing an active role in such efforts. Objects are considered key elements of the strategies that humans use to engage with their world; that is, as political and tactical weapons that themselves have agency (Gell 1998). The interest is in distilling insights relevant for developing an archaeology of cooperation, and evaluating the relative merits of different perspectives on the topic. For example, can the organizing epistemologies and theories of historical archaeology be usefully squared with those that inform the evolutionary archaeologies? Or does something important get lost in the bargain?

## HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGIES OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

Historical archaeologists have made important breakthroughs in our understanding of cooperative behavior in the past. Paynter (2000) offers a comprehensive review of the existing literature. Race, gender, and class-based forms of collective action are also considered by contributors to Leone and Potter (1988, 1999), McGuire and Paynter (1991), Scott (1994), Delle, Mrozowski, and Paynter (2000), Van Bueren (2002), Hall and Silliman (2006), and others.

Several assumptions about race, gender, and class identity tend to guide collective action studies in historical archaeology. Identities are understood to be multiple, fluid, and situational. Orser (2010) notes that historical archaeologists today are more inclined to speak in terms of "vectors of inequality" than to focus on fixed notions of status. Understood in this way, identities are seen to be intertwined and thus difficult to study in isolation from each other. In other words, identities are constituted relationally (Meskell and Preucel 2004). Brubaker and Cooper (2000) have critiqued this "soft," constructivist view of identity, arguing that it can allow any number of putative identities to proliferate, empty the term of meaning, and thereby lose "analytical purchase" on the world. They are equally critical of stronger, categorical views that fix and essentialize identity and thus inform the sort of identity politics critiqued by McGuire and Wurst (2002). Brubaker and Cooper instead argue for the use of alternative terms like "identification" and "self-understanding." Here, I stick with the relational understanding

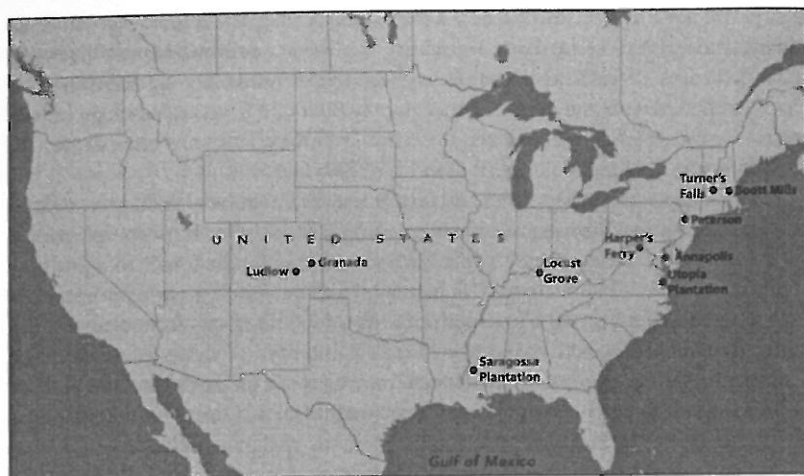


FIGURE 6.1 Archaeological sites or nearby towns mentioned in text

of identity while remaining cognizant of the fact that *all* conceptions of the world have merits and liabilities as entry points for critical analysis and social change (Saitta 2005).

The following review is necessarily selective. The studies described successfully demonstrate, or show great potential to demonstrate, how shared existential anxiety and identity can produce specific collective strategies for achieving change (see Figure 6.1 for a map of archaeological sites or nearby towns mentioned in the text). Because of the interpenetrability of race, class, and gender, my assignment of a study to one or another of these organizing categories is in some cases arbitrary. All of these studies, however, are illustrative of what is possible with an archaeology attuned to collective action.

## Race

African diaspora studies provide a rich source of insights about race-based collective action in the past. Much discussion and debate has swirled around the existence and meaning of “Africanisms”—objects that either have a clear connection to African cultural practice or show significant commonalities among African diaspora communities—in the New World (Mullins 2004). There is a spreading recognition that a search for Africanisms is unproductive if it invests objects with a static identity, or reinforces a monolithic view of African culture (Orser 1998). The same can be said of the search for any other objects presumed to be associated with ethnic identity (Upton 1996). Alternatively, material objects are best viewed relationally—as having fluid meanings dependent on context that conceivably reference something in addition to, and even other than, racial or ethnic culture. That is, they are best seen as Hodderian “symbols in action”—

as active representations of otherness manipulated by individuals and groups within power relations (Hodder 1982; Leone 2005; Orser 1998; Singleton 1995).

Singleton (2005) summarizes important work by Lorena Walsh and Patricia Samford that implicates slave collective agency in the Chesapeake region. Walsh shows that at Utopia Plantation in Virginia, slaves built housing using Anglo-Virginian carpentry techniques but used African ideas of domestic space in placing houses in a square formation around an open courtyard. These courtyards would have provided central places for cooking and socializing. Singleton also reviews interesting studies of the rectangular and square subfloor pits that were dug within slave houses. Samford resists functional interpretations that relate pits to storage or to the concealment of pilfered items and, instead, favors a ritual interpretation. Using accounts of West African Igbo and Yoruba religious practices, Samford suggests that these pits served as household shrines used to bury religious items. Singleton notes that the existence of these pits often produced conflict between slaveholders and slave laborers to the extent that they served to challenge slaveholder control over living spaces.

The most famous examples of slave collective agency are associated with colonoware pottery studies. Colonoware is a low-fired, unglazed, handmade, locally produced earthenware found on African American sites in the eighteenth century. Colonoware vessels were used for preparing, serving, and storing food. They are found in shapes that resemble both European and African forms. A long debate about who made colonoware has been resolved in favor of production by a number of groups, including Native Americans (Orser 1996: 117–123). The colonoware vessel is an “intercultural artifact” (Singleton and Bograd 2000). Thus, interpretation needs to respect not only the form of these objects, but also the geographical area where they are found and the relational context in which they are used.

Working in the South Carolina Lowcountry, Leland Ferguson (1991, 1992) offers the most compelling case for colonoware vessels as instruments of slave agency geared toward collective resistance. Colonoware is found in particular abundance on Lowcountry sites, especially those associated with slaves. Ferguson documents, via quantitative and qualitative analysis, that colonoware in this region connected slave foodways to West African precedents. He convincingly shows that the forms of colonoware vessels recall West African patterns. A high frequency of bowls and a bimodal size distribution of jars reflect the West African tradition of serving starches in larger vessels and sauces or relishes in smaller ones. Bowls and jars both have rounded bases, distinguishing them from Anglo-European flat and tripodal bases. Another contrast with European dining practices of the time lies in the fact that the vast majority of colonoware containers—98 percent of the sample studied by Ferguson—lack cutlery marks (Ferguson 1991: 35).

Thus, Lowcountry slaves were apparently eating like their African ancestors rather than their European masters, and by extension using foodways to build community. Additional support for an African ethos comes from evidence



indicating that colonoware pots—like Samford's Chesapeake pits—functioned in slave religious practices. A small number of colonoware bowls have features that recall a generalized West African "Bakongo" religious iconography. Bakongo refers to a "generalized cultural expression" that crosscuts ethnic differences in the Congo-Angola region of Africa, where about 40 percent of South Carolina slaves originated (Ferguson 1999: 118). The iconographic features or "cosmograms" include rounded ring bases and cross and circle designs incised into the pot's surface. In Bakongo culture clay pots are used in renewal rituals as containers for medicines and charms, and the cross and circle symbolize harmony with the universe and the continuity of life. Interestingly, in the South Carolina Lowcountry, colonoware pots are often excavated in streamside and river bottom contexts. In Bakongo cosmology water is associated with the separation between the living and spirit worlds. The water context association combined with their form and markings reinforces the interpretation of certain colonoware pots as "magic bowls" employed in community ritual.

Several lines of material evidence, along with historical analysis of Bakongo cosmology and oral testimony from a twentieth-century Georgia healer (see Ferguson 1999) thus converge to make a compelling case that the production and distribution of colonoware pottery served slave collective agency. Such agency is also evident in Lowcountry house forms, even more so than in the Chesapeake (Singleton 2005). Slaves having different ethnic roots in Africa used material objects to help build a "creolized" subculture that blended African cultural elements with other elements and, at the same time, distanced this subaltern culture from the dominant Anglo-European rationalizations that supported the planter social order. To the extent that no status differences or other boundaries are reflected within the colonoware assemblage, slaves were nurturing reciprocity and community. In short, material culture was used to build and support a pan-African sense of syncretic culture among the diverse peoples enslaved in the South Carolina Lowcountry (Ferguson 1999; Orser 1998).

Finally, work by Paul Mullins (1999) on African American use of material goods after emancipation in Annapolis explores change over time in how segments of this population expressed their collective identity by *reinterpreting* artifacts associated with genteel white consumer culture. Between 1850 and 1930 emancipated African Americans acquired previously inaccessible mass-produced parlor goods that were symbolically charged representations of American abundance and nationalism, signaling their owner's affluence and belonging (Orser 1998). These "knickknacks" were used by whites to materialize and naturalize white privilege, and to justify discrimination against blacks (Brumfiel 2003). On Mullins's view, emancipated blacks procured these items in order to articulate their aspirations for full citizenship in a capitalist, consumer-oriented society. These objects do not indicate a desire to assimilate. Blacks gave the objects new meanings in the interest of combating old racist notions of black material inferiority, distancing themselves from old racist caricatures generally, and negotiating expanded space for themselves in a new national order (Orser 1998).

Of course, historical archaeology's contributions to studies of collective action geared toward identity maintenance and/or political resistance do not stop with analyses of African American material culture. Brighton (2004) shows how smoking pipes bearing the symbol of the "Red Hand" galvanized Irish American identity and working-class solidarity in late nineteenth-century Paterson, New Jersey. The Red Hand was associated with the Ireland Home Rule movement in the 1880s, and its use by working-class Irish Americans in Paterson signified both a connection to their homeland and a sense of place and empowerment in the United States. Shackel (2010) shows how a particular set of consumer goods from a cross-section of African American and European American households in New Philadelphia, Illinois, produced a sense of shared group consciousness in a rural community shaped by racial hostilities and strife. The work of Bonnie Clark and her students at the World War II Japanese American internment camp of Granada (Amache) in southeastern Colorado implicates several dimensions of collective action under conditions of institutional confinement. Slaughter (2006) notes that the brewing of sake was against camp regulations, but at least one surviving internee remembers sake fermenting in the wash house boiler room in her housing block. Anyone having legitimate access to the boiler room would not have had legitimate access to leftover rice. Brewing rice probably came from the mess halls, so cooks in the camp were complicit along with, perhaps, many more service workers. Internees also created small gardens in the public areas of the camp between housing blocks. These gardens likely had practical functions, such as providing shade and some relief from the stark military landscape. But some likely articulated with the reinforcement of group identity given the evidence of overt Japanese landscaping techniques. Moreover, Amache gardens often use official camp construction materials (e.g., wire, concrete block, concrete) that were probably "liberated" from War Relocation Authority stockpiles in much the same way that leftover rice was liberated from internment camp kitchens.

## Gender

Scholars researching gender have long been at the forefront of efforts to produce more nuanced understandings of social power relationships and organizational change. Paralleling historical archaeology's initial interest in documenting the slave presence through the search for Africanisms, early work in the archaeology of gender was dedicated to making women's lives more visible—"finding women" in the archaeological record. Later work turned more fully relational, studying how women and men interacted in divisions of labor and other social arrangements (e.g., contributors to Gero and Conkey 1991). Currently there is an impressive diversity of theoretical standpoints and research questions among archaeologists concerned with gender (Nelson 2006). This has led to important breakthroughs in our understanding of gender roles and strategies in the past.

Spencer-Wood's (1991, 1994, 2003) research on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century "domestic reform" sites in Boston and elsewhere explores

strategies by which female domestic reformers sought to improve the conditions of women's lives by expanding their roles in both private and public spaces. She illustrates how reformers used the material world to accomplish this goal. Reformers employed a variety of material strategies to "invade" public space, or blur the boundaries between public and private, in ways conducive to expanding women's presence and influence. Institutions dedicated to domestic reform—various women's clubs, cooperative homes, YWCAs, and other voluntary organizations—were made visually dominant parts of landscape. In some instances they were purposely built as the tallest or largest building in the neighborhood. Domestic reformers also played a central role in the emerging City Beautiful Movement. Women physically shaped and exercised control over public landscapes by introducing playgrounds, children's gardens, and green spaces.

Similar "little tactics of the habitat" (Foucault 1980: 149) were applied by reformers at smaller scales. Reform activists in Boston sought to move women out of poverty by experimenting with communal built spaces and socialized housekeeping in new cooperative women's homes. Archaeological excavations at the Magdalen Society Asylum in Philadelphia indicate that mid-nineteenth-century reformers used plain and edged white ceramics with the intention of instilling in their "fallen" women residents the moral values of modesty, frugality, simplicity, and conservatism (Spencer-Wood 1994: 194). More draconian measures like massive brick walls were used to separate and protect the Magdalens from worldly temptations and other undesirable elements. But reformers were not always so heavy handed. Archaeological evidence also shows that the Magdalen Society reformers loosened up over time as evidenced by an increase in decorated ceramics in asylum assemblages and evidence for the relaxing of other rules. Reformers were also capable of yielding to reformees who themselves exercised collective agency; witness the successful lobbying of working-class women to enhance their personal privacy through the creation of more single rooms at the Chicago YWCA (Spencer-Wood 1994: 195). Spencer-Wood's work clearly shows the archaeological potential of domestic reform sites to inform about women's collective agency, and the negotiations between reformers and working-class women over how to construct women-friendly built environments.

Diana Wall's (1991, 1994, 1999) work in New York City also focuses on the dynamics of gender, class, and materiality. Her study of ceramic assemblages of working- and middle-class households in nineteenth-century Greenwich Village illuminates class-based differences in consumer patterns in ways that disclose female collective agency (Wall 1999). Wall interprets middle- and upper-class use of Gothic twelve-sided ironstone plates as related to the perceived role of women as guardians of a family's and society's morals. An Italianate style that paralleled the genteel style of middle-class architecture is interpreted in the same way; the style created good moral character and good people. In contrast, working-class households used a whole array of molded designs absent from middle- and upper-class assemblages. While the meaning of this variation is not entirely clear, it is

certain that working-class people were not emulating middle- and upper-class understandings of women as moral guardians of the home.

Wall (1991) also compared the teaware from a working-class family to the teaware from a middle-class family. Both households had plain, paneled "Gothic" wares that were similar to their tableware. The two households differed in that the middle-class family had a second set of decorated porcelain teaware. Wall associates the two kinds of teaware with use in different social settings: morning and afternoon tea. Morning tea was a family affair, while afternoon tea was a venue for socializing with community members. She suggests that middle-class women had greater investment in displaying their status as way to impress upon friends the refinement and gentility of their families, and elevate their family's position in the class structure. Lower-class women lacked this interest. Instead, sharing tea may have been a way to create and affirm cooperative social relations. Rather than asserting their status through decorated porcelain teaware, working-class women created community by using plain wares that did not elicit competition (1991: 79).

Margaret Wood's (2002) study of working-class women in the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company coal mining town of Berwind in southeastern Colorado illustrates how women contribute to household economies in ways that make collective action possible; in this case the great Coal Field Strike of 1913–1914 (McGovern and Guttridge 1972). It is well known that labor strikes are hatched as much at the kitchen table as they are at the points of industrial production (i.e., on assembly lines and in the shafts). They are family affairs. Domestic trash at Berwind dating before the 1913 strike contains high frequencies of tin cans, large cooking pots, and big serving vessels. Mass-produced tin cans—especially large ones—represent 52 percent of all metal vessels recovered. In contrast, food storage vessels such as home canning jars represent only 1 percent of all metal artifacts. At this time it is known that coal town households routinely took in single male miners as boarders to make ends meet, given the very low wages paid by the coal company. Census records indicate that at Berwind in 1910, 53 percent of all nuclear families had one or more unrelated persons boarding in their homes (Wood 2002: 73). On average there were three boarders per household. Thus, archaeological evidence suggests that before the strike, women used store-bought canned foods to make stews and soups to feed the household. Wood calculates that through this activity women accounted for about 25 percent of the household's total income. This activity also likely provided more variety in fruits and vegetables for the woman's own family.

After the strike the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company strongly discouraged—or, in Wood's (2002: 77) words, "waged a quiet war on"—boarding as way to reduce worker opportunities for building collective solidarity. The company established and operated its own boardinghouses so that the behavior of single male miners could be more tightly controlled. Census records indicate that in 1920 the number of families taking in boarders had shrunk to 6 percent. Mining families no longer had income from boarders, and wages continued to



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remain very low. This forced some new strategizing by women on the homefront. Excavation in poststrike contexts revealed significant differences in household artifact assemblages that reflect changed strategies. Big pots and cans decrease in the trash and glass canning jars and lids increase. Mass-produced tin cans decrease to 38 percent of the total, while home canning jars increase to 29 percent. There is a significant increase—a doubling and tripling from prestrike levels—of glass food preparation bottles, such as catsup, mustard, and pepper sauce. These numbers indicate that women were doing much more home food production after the strike in order to provide for their families. Poststrike deposits also show an increase in the bones of rabbits and chickens, as well as an increase in fencing wire. The latter likely reflects more gardening related to the home production of canned foods.

Wood's analysis thus opens a window onto the shared existential realities and anxieties of women that were likely instrumental in creating interfamily ties of mutual support and assistance. These alliances would have paralleled those formed among men in the mine shafts. Both kinds of solidarity would have been required for organizing and sustaining the strike of 1913–1914 (see also Long 1985).

Finally, Amy Young's (2003) analyses of antebellum plantation landscapes show how African American women and men used different strategies to provide for their families and build community solidarity. Women at Locust Grove Plantation near Louisville, Kentucky, worked the spaces between slave houses and the communal yard between rows of houses. They conducted generalized reciprocal exchanges of items such as decorated ceramics, glass tableware, buttons, and other objects. Archaeological recovery of matched ceramic items and other artifacts from different houses indicate that they were shared out or given as gifts among the slave families. These reciprocal relations established bonds of kinship that helped the community cope with the predations and deprivations of slavery. They ensured the future of children whose parents were sold away, provided emotional support during periods of sickness and solace upon the death of a family member, and reached out to new slaves entering the community.

Young (2003) also considered male roles at Saragossa Plantation in Adams County, Mississippi, just outside Natchez (see also Young, Tuma, and Jenkins 2001). Here ethnographic, historic, and archaeological evidence converge to indicate the strategic importance of male hunting in slave communities. At Saragossa males worked the fields, forests, and streams beyond the slave quarters and the communal yard. Male hunting of small game (squirrel, raccoon, rabbit) and some deer provided sustenance for the community. This was likely accomplished through clandestine night hunting, as predicted by Paynter and McGuire (1991). But the hunting also had social and psychological purposes. It served to integrate newcomers into the slave community under conditions of a constantly fluctuating population. And it reinforced male self-worth (i.e., male as "breadwinner") in a deeply emasculating slave system. Together, these different female and male activities strengthened the entire slave community.

## Class

Several important studies have shown how workers struggle with industrial capitalists over the conditions under which their labor is appropriated and compensated and its products distributed. Paynter and McGuire (1991) is a key source for much interpretive theory in this area. They note how collective resistance by workers in an industrial setting can take many forms including malingering, sabotage of machinery, and destruction of products, strategies that can all have archaeological correlates.

Nassaney and Abel (1993, 2000) investigated such strategies in the Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts. They analyzed material remains at the John Russell Cutlery Company in Turner's Falls, one of world's leading nineteenth-century knife manufacturers. Relocated from Greenfield and opened in 1870, the Turner's Falls plant was a prototype modern cutlery factory. Major modernization in the 1880s was informed by new techniques of managing work that separated product conception and production, subdivided the process of production, and standardized production tasks. These techniques degraded human labor by deskilling the work force (Braverman 1974). Archaeologists found a large quantity of artifacts related to primary production along the factory's riverbank. Discarded materials included inferior and imperfectly manufactured parts from various stages of the production process. Nassaney and Abel interpret this material as the residue of worker contempt toward, and defiance of, the new system of closely regulated work discipline. Workers may have intentionally spoiled knives—a kind of industrial sabotage—as way to assert some degree of autonomy on the shop floor. Documentary evidence suggests that the historical context was exactly right for expecting such action. Declining real wages, deteriorating work conditions, and layoffs produced frequent disputes between managers and workers in the late nineteenth century.

Shackel (2000, 2004) offers similar sorts of insights in his study of nineteenth-century sites in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Here, renovation of the local beer bottling works revealed hundreds of bottles accumulated in the factory walls and in the basement of the building's elevator shaft. All bottles date between 1893 and 1909. Working conditions at this time were deplorable: workers suffered fourteen-hour days and exposure to dramatic temperature swings and noxious acids. Accident rates were 30 percent higher than in other trades. Evidence from the walls and shaft suggests that workers intentionally and covertly *consumed* the products of their labor, and concealed their subversive behavior by disposing otherwise reusable bottles out of the view of their supervisors. These workers were, in effect, defying industrial discipline by drinking the owner's profits.

Shackel (2000) also compared household assemblages of managers and workers employed at the local armory during the mid-nineteenth-century transition from piecework to wage labor. Archaeological excavations revealed differences between managers and wage laborers in the consumption of tablewares. The houses of managers displayed the latest goods including pearlwares, white-ware, and ceramics with shell and transfer print designs. Managers were thus

fully embracing the consumer culture associated with industrialization. On the other hand, houses of wage laborers contained unfashionable, out-of-date goods like creamwares and shell-edged ceramics. Shackel suggests that this working-class purchasing behavior was purposeful, motivated by a nostalgic longing for the "good old days" when family members had more control over their everyday lives. The assemblages recall a time when husbands were craftsmen, and when wives had better access to markets. Working-class men and women thus exercised agency in a way that critiqued the new industrial system.

The work of Beaudry, Cook, and Mrozowski (1991; Beaudry and Mrozowski 2002) at Boott Mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, explores how nineteenth- and twentieth-century workers expressed class identity and personal aspirations in a tightly managed environment. Lowell was the nation's first mass industrial city, and corporate paternalism loomed large. Lowell is the archetypal example of town planning for social control, and it provided a model that was emulated elsewhere. Industrialists in Lowell incorporated landscape as an active element in the reinforcement of social class distinctions. They located the textile mill, worker housing, and manager housing close together as a way to maximize surveillance and control and accentuate hierarchical structure. The construction of standardized worker housing with rooms of uniform size and shape would have sent a message of worker expendability and interchangeability, thereby producing compliance with the status quo. In contrast, managers' houses were distinguished by higher-quality facing materials and fashionable interiors (Mrozowski 1991).

Excavations in the backlots of typical boardinghouses, however, produced abundant evidence of worker noncompliance with the strict social order. Despite their limited power and economic means, workers were apparently creating their own identities and building up a "subculture" of resistance. An abundance of medicine bottles suggests consumption for alcohol content, as way to defy company discouragement of drinking and other efforts to control workers' leisure. Workers also created another distinctive category of pipes—short-stemmed white clay pipes—to express membership and pride in the working class. But workers were not entirely rejecting the notion of upward class mobility. Aspirations in this direction are indicated by ceramics suggesting middle-class dining habits and inexpensive costume jewelry that imitates costlier "class-conscious" items.

Our own work at the Ludlow Tent Colony in southeastern Colorado shows class-based collective agency manifested in a number of different ways (Saitta 2007; Larkin and McGuire 2009). The Ludlow Colony was occupied by the families of striking coal miners during Colorado's 1913–1914 coal field troubles. Many of Ludlow's occupants likely came from the coal camp of Berwind, discussed above. On April 20, 1914, the Ludlow Colony—numbering over 100 tents and about 200 people—was burned, and a couple dozen occupants killed, by an armed force of company gunmen and hired mercenaries. The attack appeared intended to break the long and acrimonious coal strike, and came to be known as the Ludlow Massacre. Archaeological work has aimed to clarify the everyday strategies of survival, social integration, and public image making crucial to the

success of collective labor action. For example, the layout of the colony on the open Colorado prairie appears to have been strategic (Jacobson 2002, 2006). Family tents were laid out at a 45-degree angle to the east–west section road, running southwest–northeast rather than parallel. This diagonal arrangement would have restricted a passer-by's ability to peer into the colony, essentially terminating their view at the perimeter line of tents. Such concern for privacy is not surprising given the colony's exposed location in a larger landscape and the fact that it was subject to search by the state militia and other local authorities looking to keep the peace between striking miners and armed coal company operatives.

A collective concern to present an image of order and solidarity to an outside, "Progressive Era" world that often disparaged immigrant miners as volatile, uncivilized foreigners was also paramount. The colony contained numbered tents and named streets and featured a prominently located communal meeting place and medical facility. A baseball field for playing America's pastime was laid out directly across the section road. Within the colony a significant number of excavated artifacts reflect strong ethnic affiliations, including buttons inscribed with Habsburg eagles, embossed bottles from Italian and Croatian cities, and a suspender part bearing, in Italian, the inscription "Society of Tyrolean Alpinists." However, there is nothing in the distribution of these objects to suggest that the colony had ethnically distinct precincts. The public image presented was one of social order, unity, and solidarity.

Tent artifact assemblages at Ludlow offer insight into other strategies for building collective unity and solidarity out of social and cultural differences. Like the workers at Boott Mills discussed above and immigrant workers generally, mining families striking at Ludlow may have been expressing their aspirations for upward mobility in their new country with material culture. Ludlow colonists were aware of American middle-class values that prescribed elaborate matched table settings and formal teawares (Gray 2005). We have found in Ludlow deposits matched or near-matched sets of teaware having floral designs with gilded accents and embossed pieces. A child's tea set has also been excavated, and was likely used for teaching these middle-class values. But while the occupants of Ludlow's tents possessed the material culture that symbolized and transmitted traditions of tea taking, they did not necessarily fully embrace this tradition. A set of demitasse cups was excavated from one tent cellar, suggesting that the occupants also consumed espresso or coffee. According to Mary Thomas, a survivor of the massacre, she and her neighbors regularly shared coffee (O'Neal 1971).

Ludlow strikers thus may have sought to convey civility by using finely decorated vessels, but they did so on their own terms. They used their fine teawares to convey a message of gentility and upward mobility while perhaps maintaining a cultural preference for coffee. Through their daily practice, they negotiated a balance between traditional cultural values and those attached to American middle-class status. The stratigraphic context of the decorated and undecorated wares in one excavated tent cellar also suggests conscious strategizing to build class solidarity out of social and cultural difference. Most of the decorated vessels were



recovered from *below* the charred floorboards in the feature fill, in the deepest part of the cellar. During the final excavation of the cellar it was noted that many of the vessels, including the decorated teaware, were associated with metal hardware and wood fragments. This suggests that they were stored in a piece of furniture for safekeeping. The demitasse set was also excavated in this context. In contrast, most of the plain ware was removed from the strata *above* the floorboards. This stratigraphic positioning suggests that the household used plainware most frequently in their daily practice, while reserving decorated vessels and the demitasse set for special occasions. These practices would parallel those reconstructed by Wall (1991) for her working-class families in Greenwich Village. In both social contexts the use of plainware would not have elicited the sort of comparison and competition that could threaten community solidarity. That the Ludlow strikers chose to store their decorated and loosely matched teaware—as well as the demitasse set, an object perhaps most loaded with an ethnic “charge”—reflects both the value they placed on those objects and their commitment to building community solidarity. They were not totally rejecting Americanizing influences, but rather negotiating a careful balance between American and Old World identities that would serve the cause of collective action.

## CONCLUSIONS FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF COOPERATIVE BEHAVIOR

Historical archaeologists have done fine work illuminating race, gender, and class-based forms of collective action in the past. They have theorized the social and economic conditions under which collective action, in both slave-based and capitalist modes of production, is expected to occur. They have documented specific strategies that disenfranchised and marginalized people in various political and economic circumstances used to cope with social inequality and oppression. They have identified specific material cultures that helped to galvanize group cooperation and symbolize group identity in particular times and places. Their work is rich in theoretical and methodological implications for studying not only the modern capitalist world, but also organizational variation and change in the ancient, prehistoric world.

The question remains: Can the organizing epistemologies and theories of historical archaeology—or what we might more broadly term historical anthropology—be usefully squared with those that inform evolutionary anthropology? Or does something important get lost in the bargain? Certainly there are a number of contentious issues that divide these paradigms (see O’Brien and Lyman 2004; Pauketat 2004). On the specific issue of cooperative behavior, evolutionary approaches constitute a diverse lot (Shennan 2008). Still, some squaring of theoretical commitments is possible (e.g., O’Brien and Lyman 2000). Evolutionary and historical anthropologies both recognize that humans have evolved capacities for cooperative behavior. Both recognize that material conditions (e.g., a shared experience of economic misery and deprivation) can be powerful spurs to collective action. Such parallels and convergences between evolutionary and

historical approaches to understanding human social life and change go back, arguably, to the Boasians. Boas is often presented in histories of anthropology as a severe critic of all forms of evolutionary thought. Alternatively, Lewis (2001) persuasively argues that Boas was a “historicist” in the same sense as Darwin. That is, he was aware of, and sympathetic to, a Darwinian model of change recognizing that the world is open, diverse, undetermined, and shaped by historical contingency as well as human agency (see also O’Brien and Lyman 2000).

Recognizing these convergences and overlaps may help explain why substantive inferences about the past produced by many evolutionary archaeological frameworks are consistent with those produced by any number of other, nonevolutionary archaeological frameworks (Saitta 2002). Neiman’s (2008) evolutionary interpretation of subfloor pits in slave houses at Monticello and throughout the wider Chesapeake as “safe deposit boxes” used by enslaved people to increase the security of their food supply strikes me as fully consistent with historical and “agentic” approaches to understanding the past. So too is Galle’s (2010) interpretation of the metal buttons and refined ceramic wares used by eighteenth-century Chesapeake slaves as “signals” that communicated to potential allies the owner’s personal skills, purchasing power, social mobility, and knowledge of the outside world. Galle recognizes that evolutionary theory and agency theory can speak to and even harmonize with each other. Regrettably, however, she caricatures the latter as relativist, subjectivist, and too often disinterested in archaeological data, when quite the opposite is the case.

There can be significant differences, however, with respect to the larger ambitions of those anthropologies geared to producing knowledge of cooperative action today and in the past. There is a much greater likelihood that practitioners of historical anthropology will orient their work toward using knowledge of world to intervene in the world; that is, to accomplish not only *explanatory* but also *emancipatory* work (Saitta 2008). Orser (2010) notes that “giving voice to the voiceless” is a major strength of historical archaeology, and that an increasing number of scholars are recognizing the political nature of their work. McGuire (2008) describes this critical, engaged approach as turning on the Marxist notion of “praxis”: a commitment to know, critique, and change the world. Preucel and Mrozowski (2010) describe it as constituting a “New Pragmatism” in archaeological inquiry, one informed by the work of Boas’s contemporaries William James and John Dewey, among others. However described, this approach to inquiry frames and justifies research questions and theories based on their relevance to society today. It prioritizes their accessibility to public as well as scholarly audiences. It understands that evaluation of competing ways of knowing the past must be made on pragmatic grounds; that is, on the extent to which theories and interpretations of the past serve perceived human need. This critical, activist edge is much less apparent in the evolutionary anthropologies than in the historical anthropologies even if some practitioners of the former are sympathetic to the cause (e.g., Galle 2010: 21). Interestingly, Lewis (2001) sees Deweyan pragmatism to be as much of an organizing influence on Boasian anthropology



as Darwinian evolutionism. It stands to reason that such an orientation would require a distinctive—and perhaps incommensurable—set of organizing concepts, metaphors, analogues, and heuristics.

Historical anthropologists have no illusions that their work will change the world. As McGuire (2008) notes, there are better ways of accomplishing social change than by doing archaeology. But at the same time we should not minimize the potential of public scholarship for producing critical thought about how the contemporary world came to be and how alternative arrangements for organizing human social life have different consequences and effects in the world. Orser (1998: 76) asserts that the results of historical archaeology such as those described in this chapter “have potential meaning for all people seeking to understand how the social inequalities of today were materially expressed in the past.” Our scholarly and public outreach work with the descendant community of coal miners and trade unionists living in towns around the Ludlow Massacre Memorial in southeastern Colorado amply illustrates the truth of Orser’s claim (McGuire 2004; Saitta 2007, especially chapter 7; see also Shackel 2009). Turning critical thought into collective action that seriously challenges and eliminates the various social and institutional inequalities that bedevil us is another matter. History tells us that the potential for group cooperation and solidarity that springs from a common experience of class can all too easily be eroded by the lived experiences of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and sexuality (and vice versa). Thus, better understanding of how the intersection of these and other potentially divisive social identities complicates collective action remains the major challenge facing an engaged historical anthropology.

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