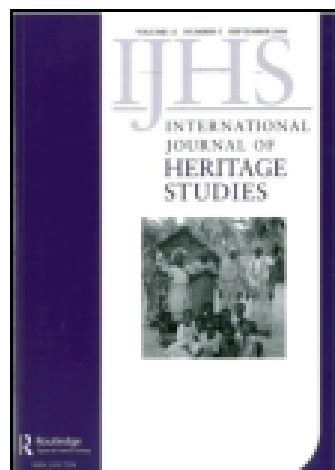


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Anna S. Agbe-Davies^a

^a Department of Anthropology , University of North Carolina , Chapel Hill, USA

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Concepts of community in the pursuit of an inclusive archaeology

Anna S. Agbe-Davies*

Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, USA

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Community is a key concept that shapes how we approach our relationships with other individuals and groups. In this article, the author reviews how scholars and laypeople alike use the concept of ‘community’ in both theoretical and applied contexts. What do heritage professionals expect from the communities with whom they work? How do these communities define and constitute themselves? The answers to such questions have broad implications for the way that scholars interact and collaborate with stakeholders. Examples are presented from the author’s archaeological projects at sites associated with communities in the African diaspora that illustrate the importance of an explicit and critical approach to the idea of ‘community’. The discussion concludes with preliminary findings from an investigation of the meanings of community among black Chicagoans in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Keywords: African diaspora; North America; archaeology; engaged scholarship; collaboration; community

Introduction: why community matters

As increasing numbers of archaeologists come to terms with our responsibilities towards people in addition to the profession and to archaeological resources, we seek a language with which to express this commitment. Whereas previously, the entire emphasis was on the past social groups being studied, more and more archaeologists now practice with, in, and for, living ‘communities’. For example, in the recent *Places in Mind: Public Archaeology as Applied Anthropology* (Shackel and Chambers 2004), seven of ten case studies foregrounded the concept of ‘community’ in their respective titles. This paper explores the ways that the concept of community has been deployed by archaeologists and compares these with the meanings of the term as developed by ethnographers. Specifically, I draw examples from my work at sites throughout North America and the Caribbean for which community engagement was a particular goal and where the archaeologists aspired to be of service to contemporary people of African descent.

Themes discussed below include the question of who controls the research agenda, and to what extent a radical research program truly serves a conservative community. How are communities formed and what communities ‘count’? How can a more focused, deliberate and theoretically informed concept of community improve our ability to reach and serve its members? Our concepts of community must take into account ways in which communities are constituted, their non-homogeneity, and how

*Email: agbe-davies@unc.edu

we might become integrated into them. As practitioners, we need to deploy a non-essentialist concept of community that allows us to analyse where we might fit into existing frameworks and determine how we can participate in them. It is when we enter into communion with individuals and groups outside the discipline that archaeology begins to become a truly inclusive practice.

For many years our obligations were unspoken. An archaeologist's primary service was to the *archaeological* community. Our disciplinary interests and networks were the organising principles. If any obligations were articulated, they referred back to the objective value of archaeology because of its capacity to produce new knowledge. Why the change? Following from the ideas of standpoint theory (Haraway 1988), it may be that change in this regard is due to the changes in who archaeologists are (Zeder 1997, Franklin 2001, Agbe-Davies 2002a). As we see broader educational opportunities, a democratised discipline, and slow but constant improvement of national, gender, racial and other diversities within the field, there have been more archaeologists for whom loyalty to the discipline first-and-only rings hollow.¹

There are, of course, other explanations for the turn towards a community-serving archaeology. Certainly, with the expansion of government-mandated and publicly funded excavation and analysis (such as 'cultural resource management' archaeology in the US), it may be that archaeologists are becoming more accustomed to the idea of accountability to constituencies other than other archaeologists (see the discussion in Marshall 2002, for example). Another contributing factor could be the increasing power of some *descendant* communities, such as Canadian First Nations, American Indian Nations, and Aboriginal Australians, to influence the progress of archaeological practice. In the years since the establishment of laws such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (United States, 1990) and the Cultural Record Act (Queensland, 1987), Indigenous people have increasingly used them to create more equitable and mutually productive working relationships with researchers, even as archaeologists have learned how to use the mandated processes to improve the discipline (Zimmerman 1989, Swidler *et al.* 1997, Smith *et al.* 2003, Prangnell *et al.* 2010, but see also Hemming and Rigney 2010).² As a result of these developments, archaeologists are increasingly willing to consider the perspectives of many groups, even those who are not glossed as 'Indigenous' or who may not have any formal or legal right to influence our work (see, for example, Smith and Waterton 2009, Chirikure *et al.* 2010).

Like many archaeologists practicing in the United States, I am trained as an anthropologist, nurtured in learning communities where it was agreed that 'archaeology is anthropology or it is nothing' (Phillips 1958). Such an orientation ensures a thorough grounding in traditional ethnography, often in the form of 'community studies'. As anthropologists, we are trained to focus our attention not on objects or buildings or landscapes, but people, and to think of those people in terms of social groups, rather than individuals.³ Archaeologists and other social scientists have shown time and again that our perceptions of the past are heavily influenced by our perspectives on the present (e.g., from Trigger 1980, Wilk 1985 to Boyd 2008, Mullins 2008). Likewise, I would argue that our ideas about *past* communities inform our interactions with people in the *present* day. This is especially so when we conceive of these people as having some kind of link (historical, genealogical, cultural, geographic) with a past 'community'. Which begs the question, what does this thing, 'community', constitute? The question is particularly important to explore in a systematic and rigorous fashion

given that archaeology is increasingly framed in terms of serving some greater purpose (Potter 1991, Little 2002) on behalf of a community.

Community, in theory

Gerald W. Creed locates the scholarly use of the word in the seventeenth- to nineteenth-century attempts to distinguish social relations from states and languages, communities being the small-scale loci of direct relations. Its significance is captured in such dichotomies as mechanical vs. organic solidarity, or *gemeinschaft* vs. *gesellschaft* (Creed 2006a, p. 25). But there is by no means a consensus definition of 'community'. By the 1950s, a compilation of social science definitions included over 90 examples with little significant overlap (Rapport 1996, p. 114). Yet there are some general themes that recur repeatedly. Most anthropological definitions of 'community' stress common interests, common locale, and a common social system or structure.

Approaches to community since the middle of the twentieth century have responded to the definitive statements by Robert Redfield in his landmark work *The Little Community*. Redfield presented 'the little community' as having four aspects: distinctiveness (from other communities); smallness; homogeneity (in terms of activities and attitudes, as well as slowness of change); and self-sufficiency (economically and in terms of its own literal reproduction (Redfield 1955, p. 4). Critiques of this concept (e.g., Wolf 1982, Anderson 1991, Isbell 2000, McCarthy 2001) note that it artificially isolates the constituent members of a community – ignoring entanglements with the wider world – and reduces membership to a shared worldview. According to Creed, this sets up 'communities' as the analytical equivalent of 'cultures' or 'kin-groups' with attendant uncritical ideas about corporate identity, insularity, and solidarity (Creed 2006a, pp. 28–29, 39).

Archaeologists have frequently drawn on a 'theoretically weak' concept of community as when the term is understood to signify 'the context in which [research] is undertaken' (Winthrop 1991, p. 41), or perhaps as an ill-defined scale of analysis somewhere between the household and the region. Recent explicit considerations of the community concept in archaeology contrast the idea of a 'natural' unit – grounded in shared space, and within which individuals share goals, values and experiences – with the idea of an 'imagined' community – wherein community is not a thing but a process, a perspective that emphasises relationships, power, and context (Isbell 2000).

In her introduction to *World Archaeology*'s special issue *Community Archaeology*, Yvonne Marshall observed that there were few contributions from North America, and that the two represented in the volume did not situate themselves within a specific tradition of 'community archaeology', perhaps because of its development outside of the mainstream of academic, theory-driven archaeology (Marshall 2002, p. 213). Yet, of these two articles, we should note that one of them (McDavid 2002) discussed a project associated with the African diaspora. Among the subjects covered by North American historical archaeology, African-American, or African diaspora, archaeology has a long and explicit commitment to descendant communities, both particular and general, which is to say, a *literal* descendant community, and a concept of an African-American 'community' that is *generically* the inheritor of a given site's legacy. This commitment is furthermore often grounded in the theoretical outlooks of its advocates.

Some historical archaeologists have asserted that a primary goal of the archaeological study of black life in the Americas should be of use to modern-day black people (Potter 1991). Others have aimed their research at exposing the contours of past racist social structures (Mullins 1999) or countering contemporary racism (Shackel 2007). Scholars argue, for example, that critical race theory offers an important structuring paradigm for truly relevant African diaspora archaeology (Epperson 2004, McDavid 2007), and that archaeology about slavery can produce knowledge applicable to modern freedom struggles (Leone 2005). Sites where the black descendant community has participated in, even shaped, the trajectory of research (Franklin 1997b, La Roche and Blakey 1997), are deemed successes by many working in the field. And yet, we run the risk of essentialising such communities even as we claim to serve them, and exploiting the rich legacy of the African diaspora for our own arcane academic purposes. Might not a re-conceptualisation of, or a more critical approach to, 'community' prevent such an outcome?

The examples described and analysed below are a part of thematic tradition and body of practice we label 'African diaspora archaeology' (Agbe-Davies 2007). This paper uses examples from a range of archaeological projects in the Americas to illustrate the different kinds of communities we as archaeologists encounter and comment upon the nature of our service. The sites range in time from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries and in space from Barbados in the Caribbean, to the Atlantic colonies of Virginia and Bermuda, to the mid-continental city of Chicago. Each of these sites has challenged an uncritical approach to 'community' and reveals something about how we might build a more inclusive form of archaeological practice.

Bush Hill House/The George Washington House, Barbados

Archaeologists and architectural historians arrived at Bush Hill House,⁴ also called the George Washington House, with the charge of determining whether the structure standing on site could have been the only place outside of the continental United States about which one could say 'George Washington slept here' (Figure 1). Excavation units inside and adjacent to the standing structure, as well as analyses of the fabric of the building, demonstrated that Bush Hill House could indeed have been the dwelling that a teenage Washington described as 'very pleasantly situated pretty [illegible] the Sea and about a Mile from Town the prospect is extensive and by Land and pleasant by Sea as we command the prospect of Carlyle Bay' (Fitzpatrick 1925, p. 23). Follow-up excavations explored the rest of the tract in greater detail and included a sample of midden materials discarded from the house into an adjacent gully (Agbe-Davies *et al.* 2000, Agbe-Davies, *et al.* 2001, Butts *et al.* 2001, Agbe-Davies 2005, see also Stoner and Watson 2002).

The Barbados National Trust (BNT) sought a restoration strategy and furnishing plan similar to the model used by many outdoor history museums. We were, of course, agents of an archetypal history museum, Colonial Williamsburg. However, much like the 'young Turks' described by Richard Handler and Eric Gable in their ethnography of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (Handler and Gable 1997), we were not interested in furthering the glory of George Washington, or producing interpretations with him at the centre. This was not the service we wanted to provide. We hoped to do research on additional themes, ones that we thought would be valuable to a broader sector of the Barbadian community (i.e., not just BNT members). Conveniently, these themes, such as enslavement, globalisation, and comparative colonialism, were



Figure 1. The house at Bush Hill had undergone many stages of renovation, but seems to have retained fabric from an eighteenth-century structure. Here, it is shown prior to restoration by the Barbados National Trust. © A.S. Agbe-Davies, 2001.

outcomes that would be valued in our home community – that is to say, among archaeologists and other social scientists (Cummins 2004, Agbe-Davies 2009). The BNT was not hostile to these efforts, but clearly saw them as secondary to the problem of identifying the House as the same rented by the Washington brothers, and developing a restoration plan.

Not only were our interests at odds with our client/host's, but other Barbadians were critical of the continued celebration of 'the great man' by preservation efforts. There was a local critique of the idea that the Trust and the government might spend millions of Barbadian dollars to highlight a visit by 'a foreign slave-owner' (Hughes 1999). While there, we relied entirely on the BNT to establish opportunities for public engagement. We were assisted in our excavation and lab work by a variety of Trust and non-Trust volunteers, many of whom expressed great enthusiasm for the project and the focus on Barbadian history. In retrospect, we should have been more deliberate and focused in our efforts to publicise the project and its preliminary results. In the few opportunities that we had to present our work (a lecture and site open house), we had a good turnout, but it is difficult to assess whether our work was well-received or meaningful. Clearly, the community – at any scale – is seldom homogeneous, (cf. Redfield 1955). From this tension, we take the lesson that different communities, constituted by interest, may have opposing goals for an archaeological project, goals that might not be easily reconciled or mutually accommodated.

Rich Neck plantation, Virginia

Construction of a new upscale neighbourhood threatened the seventeenth through nineteenth-century archaeological sites associated with the Ludwell family plantation at Rich Neck, prompting its archaeological study from 1992 to 2000 (McFaden *et al.* 2003). During most of the eighteenth century, the owning family lived elsewhere and the site was the domain of their enslaved workforce. Two dwellings, an earlier

single-cell structure (Agbe-Davies 1999) and a later duplex (Franklin 1997a, 2004) were likely home to some of the 21 men, women, and children described in Philip Ludwell III's probate inventory of 1767.

In our excavations at the eighteenth-century slave quarter,⁵ we were anxious to reach out to 'the African-American community' as an audience for our efforts and to include them as participants in associated activities. By this we meant local people of African descent. This would entail aiming for an audience very different from the traditional target of Colonial Williamsburg's efforts, whose visitors are 'affluent, overwhelmingly white, older than average, well-educated, and geographically far-flung' (Gable *et al.* 1992, p. 782). As it happens, our receptive 'community' consisted of several other groups than the one we intended (Figure 2).

Members of what we might call a *regional* African-American community expressed an interest in our work. These individuals were largely middle-upper class (as denoted by occupation, primarily) and came from across Virginia and from nearby states to learn about and support our efforts. They had a keen interest in African-American history and through their comments indicated that they saw this project as contributing to the study of African-American life. Allied museum professionals formed another important community. Interpreters, historians, and other staff from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, largely African-American, volunteered at the dig, came to our open houses, and offered their expertise in such areas as local archives and specific craft industries. They came from the local area, appeared to be people of African descent, primarily, and had a built-in interest in the site via our common networks within our employing institution. Neighbours of the site, which is nestled in a development of then newly built, rather large houses, not far from the historic district, also came to watch, learn, and comment. To all appearances, none of *these* 'visitors' were of African descent, yet their connection to the neighbourhood (no matter how recent) piqued their interest in the site. Likewise, the construction workers who were building the houses around the site formed another unexpected community. These people, primarily non African-American, contributed to our



Figure 2. Maria Franklin – standing centre – discusses the excavation at Rich Neck with visitors during an open house. © A.S. Agbe-Davies, 1994.

research by discussing hunting in the area, once they learned of our interest in the source of all of the non-domesticated fauna we were recovering. They informed us about other sites and artefacts they uncovered in the course of their building activities. They also watched over the site and the project. We worked in the same locale on a daily basis and in the course of ordinary conversation, discovered our shared interests.

As noted previously, ethnographic approaches to community often centre on notions of shared interests, a shared social system or network, and a shared locale. Each of the communities described above connected with the site on one or more of these criteria, despite having little to no overlap with the community envisioned as the beneficiary of our efforts. The Rich Neck case demonstrates how a site's communities were constituted along different criteria (interests, locale, and social system – or a combination thereof) yet they all coalesced around the site. They provided help, and accepted our service as valuable and valid. Part of my own blindness⁶ to the possibility of multiple communities for the site seems in hindsight to have come from a classist, possibly even racist expectation that a local/black/working class population of Williamsburg *needed* our archaeology. In my youthful enthusiasm for the potential of archaeology to speak to the stories of 'those of little note' (Scott 1994), 'outreach' to this community was an obligation and a service, but not a collaborative effort nor, I fear, envisioned as a relationship among equals.

Springfield, Bermuda

Springfield was the family home of the Hinsons and the Gilberts, prominent and wealthy West Enders, beginning in 1671 and running into the 1960s. The site offered the opportunity to examine the development of that family over several centuries, including their reliance on the people they held as slaves, children as well as adults labouring as domestics, common labourers, masons, pilots and boatmen. The excavation project was intended to provide more information about the construction and renovation of the manor house and adjacent support buildings, to examine the yard for traces of earlier dwellings, and to test the surrounding forest preserve for evidence of contemporaneous sites associated with the Gilberts' occupation of Springfield⁷ (Agbe-Davies 2002b).

The overall project was designed around an archaeology day camp for 11–15-year-olds (Figure 3). The goal was to increase their appreciation for Bermuda history and the role of the Bermuda National Trust in preserving the built heritage of the island. It was hoped that such an experience would expose hitherto uninvolved citizens in the protection of Bermuda's historical legacy. A secondary goal of the project sponsors was to provide new research about the property, as a follow-up to prior excavations. The impetus for the project came from the Bermuda National Trust (the Trust), a venerable institution and certainly an agent of established interests. Furthermore, the archaeology committee in particular has a strong expatriate influence. However, while the goal was to reach out to underserved and local communities on the west end of the island, there was little truly local participation. Nearly all of the campers were from elsewhere on the island. A large fraction of the campers and most of the adult volunteers, who participated in a coordinated excavation at the site, were also expatriates. Furthermore, while the excavation was well executed and reported promptly, we decided against using novice excavators to investigate some of the more sensitive (and informative) areas of the site. So the research value of the project – the site's



Figure 3. 'Time Travelers' at Springfield were able to experience multiple aspects of archaeological investigation, including washing artefacts. © A.S. Agbe-Davies, 2001.

contribution to the archaeological community – was trumped by the service value of having non-archaeologists participate.

Significantly, perhaps ironically, the house and grounds at Springfield are the site of a 'Community Centre' which at the time of our project provided a summer day camp for neighbourhood children. There was no coordination with their programming or the children attending their sessions. We did make contact with the director in order to ensure that our excavation activities did not encroach on their space and plans. However, I did not make advance contact with the staff in time to do more than this, so focused was I on the sponsor's interests in working with children in the Trust day camp, and my own research interests in completing a much-needed survey of the grounds. Perhaps, naively, I anticipated that the community angle would flow naturally and without planning from the outreach designed in coordination with the Trust.

It was only after we were on the ground, actually working at the site and commuting from our lodging on the west end that I began to make the contacts I needed to fill my other, unarticulated, goal of serving locale-based and socially based communities. For example, one afternoon the organiser of a gardening program at the Centre struck up a casual conversation with us. He was responsible for the garden plot that I had observed in the course of our shovel-test survey – one that was quite close to the highest concentration of eighteenth-century artefacts in the survey area, and a possible

location for a heretofore-unknown component of the overall site. He was very interested in our efforts and mentioned the artefacts that his program participants encountered as they tilled the soil in the plot. He wanted to know what to do with these artefacts and how they might be used to teach the children more about the island's history. He saw an appreciation for Bermudian history, particularly the legacy of the island's black population, as related to the goals of self-sufficiency and productivity that guided his gardening program. Another important encounter involved a descendant of one of the black residents of Springfield. Mr. Malcolm Gilbert provided his family genealogy to me, and shared his perspective on local history. We met this gentleman not as a result of a targeted oral history project, or through introductions arranged by the Trust, but because we stayed late at the site one afternoon to finish up a series of photographs that needed to be taken before work resumed the next day. Such serendipitous encounters become possible when we as researchers engage with communities on their own terms: being present locally, engaging in social networks, and discovering shared interests.

The Phyllis Wheatley Home for Girls, Chicago

In 1906, the members of the Phyllis Wheatley Club decided to dedicate their organisation to providing for the needs of the many young black women who came to Chicago during what has come to be called the 'Great Migration'. Among the services they provided was the Phyllis Wheatley Home for Girls (the Home), where single women could obtain room and board, thus avoiding some of the dangers of coming to a strange city alone, as these women were denied access to so many of the social services available to white newcomers (Davis 1922, Knupfer 1997). We have been excavating at the site of one of these Homes since 2006⁸ in collaboration with neighbourhood partners as part of the 'Phyllis Wheatley Home Rebirthing Project' (Agbe-Davies 2008, under review).

The research at the Home has been driven by community interests and goals since its inception. Though Marshall notes, 'most commonly perhaps, archaeologists begin by identifying the site or sites on which they want to work and the emergence of a community with interests in those sites follows from that choice' (Marshall 2002, pp. 215–216), at the Home the selection of the site grew out of contacts with members of existing community organisations dedicated to preservation, youth education, and black history in Chicago. I had introduced myself to a wide range of organisations and individuals through existing contacts and blind solicitations, and began participating in ongoing work to, for example, secure National Heritage Area designation for the Bronzeville neighbourhood. As a result of building those social networks, that is to say, becoming a part of that preservation 'community' at some level, I was introduced to the two activists with whom I now collaborate on this project. Joann Tate is the owner of what was once the Home, and an expert on horticulture and youth education. Her former neighbour Bobbie Johnson is a registered nurse and an advocate for family literacy. Together, we have developed a vision for excavation and associated activities that bring to light the story of the black women who founded the Home, and those who resided there, from the mid-1920s through the 1970s (Figure 4).

Throughout our association, I have attempted to consider critically the extent to which I participate fully in the communities reached by our efforts. As a black woman myself, I appreciate the need to highlight the stories of women's strength, purposefulness and activism on behalf of the Race, that are all-too-often is elided in traditional



Figure 4. Joann Tate – standing right – owner of the former Phyllis Wheatley Home for Girls, confers with student excavators about the day's finds. © A.S. Agbe-Davies, 2009.

histories of black America (but see, for example Hendricks 1998, Wolcott 2001, Knupfer 2006). On the other hand, I am not a native Chicagoan, nor was I, during the years I lived there, a South Sider – a significant fact in this highly segregated city (Pattillo 2007). Likewise, I am frequently reminded of my role as a university researcher, coming into a neighbourhood that has seen its share of professors come, collect their data, and leave nothing behind in return. In one of our earliest encounters, Johnson let me know on no uncertain terms, that this was not how things would go this time. In fact, Tate's permission to excavate was contingent on, among other things, my contributing to her efforts to assess the risk of lead or other toxins in the soil at the site of the Bronzeville Community Garden as part of our shovel-testing of that adjacent lot.

But to claim that this archaeological project addresses community objectives begs the question, how is community to be understood? We would do well to consider this concept first from an analytical perspective, and second, attempt to understand what it means in this social context. Anthropologists are accustomed to talking about these

two perspectives using terms corrupted from the terminology of our linguistic colleagues: 'etic' (from the outside, dependent only upon observation) and 'emic' (from the inside, requiring comprehension of the larger system in order to be meaningful). A critical appreciation of the meanings of 'community'-as-object is in part dependent upon our ability to recognise both analytical and functional meanings of the concept. In other words, we need to recognise our participation in multiple kinds of meaning-making 'communities' (-as-subject).

Unlike some (Isbell 2000), I think it is possible to reconcile the ideas of community as a natural category and as a process. For while it may not be strictly true that we can encounter and investigate distinctive, small, homogeneous, and self-sufficient collectivities of people within clearly demarcated territories, these are the qualities and phenomena that people engaged in 'imagining' point to in their active creation and re-creation of community. The situation is analogous to the social scientific category of 'race'. While not objectively 'real', it *becomes* real through its enactment by people who behave as if it were (Harrison 1995, Mukhopadhyay and Moses 1997). In other words, its reality is not natural or essential, but rather processual or generative. Therefore, as social scientists, we need to familiarise ourselves with the objectively real phenomena with which individuals and groups produce their understanding of their communities.

For example, researchers have developed a map that indicates the areas of Chicago that were for a time covered by restrictive real estate covenants – private legal agreements that prohibited property owners from renting or selling homes to 'colored' people (Hirsch 2005). Black Chicagoans became increasingly concentrated in the non-covenanted areas of the South Side, a pattern that remains into the twenty-first century, long after the covenants were outlawed. In recent years, this map has been transformed from an artefact of segregation into a planning document that guides preservation efforts among black activists in the city. The map does not literally mark off a contemporary 'South Side' or an historic 'Black Metropolis' (Drake and Cayton 1993 [1945]), but is instrumental in understanding the reality of these places spatially, historically, politically, etc. We achieve this understanding by taking seriously the idea that there could be such a natural thing as a Black Metropolis and that it exists to the extent that it is named, scorned, feared, celebrated, *imagined*, by people who consider themselves to be inside or outside the (literal and metaphorical) lines on a map.

It is one thing to develop a concept of community for analytical purposes, as described above, but we should also consider what it means *inside* the social settings we study (Marcus 2000). To this end, I have begun a project to examine the shifting nature of 'community' via the analysis of twentieth and twenty-first century newspapers published by and for black Chicagoans.⁹ Preliminary content analysis of a sample of items from the *Chicago Defender* has revealed that in the early years of the Home's occupation, 'community' appears as part of institutional names (churches, centres) and as a source of values. Towards the end of the Home's institutional life, black Chicagoans talked about community in terms of organisations, programs, and collective action. In the year that included our first field season at the site of the former Home, language surrounding 'community' was more explicitly about group membership, with declining emphasis on place and shared values. Over time, 'communities' became more abstract ('[a particular named] community' became '*the* community'), and 'community' shifted from being entirely the *recipient* of beneficence to being a *source* of benefit for its members and others (Agbe-Davies in prep). It may be, as

Creed has argued, that ‘community’ as a concept that does important work in the world, in part because of its slipperiness and imprecision (Creed 2006b, p. 4).

Excavations at the Home have been undertaken as part of DePaul University’s annual archaeological field school, during which students are trained in field and laboratory techniques, but are also expected to appreciate the connection between the ongoing research and neighbourhood needs. A course in archaeological methods is required for all majors and forms an integral part of the curriculum in applied anthropology. Applied anthropology extends anthropological method and theory to the world outside of the academy and uses the tools of the discipline to address problems in the world around us (Lamphere 2004). After our first field season, I also incorporated the project into the Anthropology Department’s course ‘Community Based Applied Practice’ – the first time that the course dealt with archaeological content. Students consulted with project partners to develop two outputs, a forum on preservation and archaeology in Bronzeville (hosted at the Bronzeville Visitor and Information Center), and an eighth grade curriculum on archaeology and Bronzeville. The concept of ‘archaeology as applied anthropology’ is gaining growing currency as a means for conceptualising and theorising our work (Shackel and Chambers 2004).

Another important body of literature that archaeologists are beginning to appreciate is on the method and theory of service learning. As Michael Nassaney observes,

Archaeologists seldom think of their practice or its teaching as service-learning, even though they provide a service and have been employing experiential learning techniques for decades ... Despite the history of archaeological pedagogy, the field has been slow to adopt an explicit model of community service learning in its goals and design. (Nassaney 2004, p. 89)

Yet this model of education, where student learning comes through experiences ‘associated with volunteerism or community service’ (Nassaney 2004, p. 91), meshes well not only with traditional field training, but also with the turn in the discipline towards a practice more accountable to stakeholders, and more conscious of its potential contribution to contemporary society (Little 2002, Little and Shackel 2007). Such an approach engenders in scholar and student alike a critical assessment of their own roles ‘Who is the community anyway? What are the interests of different folk, where do they converge or diverge, and why?’ (Nassaney 2004, p. 95). Service learning furthermore emphasises the ‘service’ as a mutually beneficial form of practice, a shared responsibility, rather than a gesture of beneficence or *noblesse oblige*.

Conclusion

These cases reveal something about the problem of community and the extent to which archaeologists need to approach our work with a conscious and deliberate notion of community, in order to work effectively with stakeholders of *all* kinds. At the Phyllis Wheatley Home for Girls, I came in knowing that while I was in some sense an insider that I was in many more ways an outsider. Thus, I was much more conscious and deliberate in my attempts to understand community dynamics and situate myself within existing networks long before the excavation began. I have no doubt that the dislocating effects of working both in contexts abroad, where the lines of community are not instinctively known, and also working ‘at home’, when reality nevertheless fails to conform to our unconsidered expectations, have added to my

appreciation for the significance of the community concept (Agbe-Davies, in prep.). That explicit analysis has allowed for a more equitable working relationship with the other project partners, and is what has given me the sense that this project is meeting real community goals and needs (Agbe-Davies 2008, under review).

Our concept of community must take into account the ways that communities are continually constituted, their non-homogeneity, and how we might become integrated into them. Clearly, if we continue to think about communities in a classic, Redfieldian sense, the idea of 'joining' one as a part of the research process is naive at best, and even potentially exploitative. Rather, I advocate a non-essentialist concept of community that allows us as social scientists to see where we fit into existing networks and to determine how we, as archaeologists, can participate in them, to whatever degree possible. If we conceive of 'community' as a process rather than a thing or a place, if we acknowledge that it is 'continuously in motion' (Waterton and Smith 2010), then we might be able to identify of strategies for entering into community with those among whom we work. It is when we – particularly by virtue of our shared interests, locale, and social interactions – participate in the making of 'communities' that our discipline's work most effectively 'serves' them.

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Notes

1. Such developments are particularly clear at a meeting like the World Archaeology Congress (where some of the ideas in this paper were first presented), an organisation and conference that works consciously to break down international hierarchies and inequities within the discipline.
2. All of the above is not to say that every archaeologist agrees with the importance accorded to some other community. For example, some archaeologists express concern that by emphasising the political context of excavation and analysis (Armstrong 2008), or by including stakeholders' perspectives in developing research objectives (McKee 1994), that we undermine our authority to speak clearly on matters relating to the interpretation of the past.
3. There are important exceptions, of course. Indeed, one of my first steps towards thinking through this question of communities came through my participation in a session organised by John McCarthy in which the emphasis was on 'the individual' in contrast to 'community' (McCarthy 2001). It was a strategy to emphasise agency and to circumvent the tendency to lump people into an undifferentiated mass that gets called, for lack of a better or more precise term, a 'community'. In the case of the scholars assembled by McCarthy, the focus was on individual and community in the past, rather than the present.
4. This project was sponsored by the Barbados National Trust. The analysis of the house was a joint venture between architects from the University of Florida, along with architectural historians and archaeologists from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. I was the project archaeologist in charge of two of our three excavation seasons, under the direction of Principal Investigator Marley R. Brown, III, Director of the Department of Archaeological Research, Colonial Williamsburg.
5. Archaeology at the eighteenth-century slave quarter structures took place from 1993 to 1995, under the auspices of the Department of Archaeological Research, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Marley R. Brown, III, Principal Investigator. Maria Franklin

- directed the project at the duplex site, where I was one of her assistants in the field, lab, and development of public programming.
6. My remarks here represent my perception of our efforts and certainly do not reflect the extent of Franklin's thinking on these issues.
 7. The Bermuda National Trust was the project sponsor. I directed the excavation as a staff archaeologist with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's Department of Archaeological Research, Marley R. Brown, Principal Investigator, with assistance from J. Eric Deetz. The Time Travelers program was developed by Trust Education Officer Nicola O'Leary.
 8. Funding for this project has come from the Department of Anthropology at DePaul University for whom the site has served as the location for the summer field school. I co-directed excavations with assistance from Rebecca Graff (2006, 2007) and J. Eric Deetz (2009).
 9. I used a keyword search to select articles from three evenly spaced years: 1926, the year the Home on Michigan Avenue opened; 1966, in the waning years of the Home's operation; and 2006, the year of our first field season. There were 536 total items in 1926, 3792 in 1966, and 1069 in 2006. I took a random sample of 50 items from each year and analysed the sense of 'community' and the kinds of items in which the word appeared.

Notes on contributor

Anna S. Agbe-Davies is an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She is an historical archaeologist with research interests in the plantation societies of the colonial southeastern US and Caribbean, as well as towns and cities of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Midwest, with a particular focus on the African diaspora. Her current research projects include excavation and community collaboration at the sites of New Philadelphia, Illinois, and the Phyllis Wheatley Home for Girls on the South Side of Chicago.

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