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Identity and Collective Action in a Multiracial Community

ABSTRACT

Social identities are often fluid, dynamic, and impacted by issues related to race, class, gender, and ethnicity. The research project at New Philadelphia, Illinois has uncovered archaeological assemblages related to households classified by census takers as black, mulatto, and white, which included different genders and age groups, and residents who came from different regions in the United States, or from overseas. An examination of the material culture from a sample of households in this demographically integrated community indicates that they had ready access to a broad diversity of American-made and imported household goods. Little variation existed among households when comparing these consumer goods. The homogeneity of consumer goods from African American and European American households in this community may have reflected a shared group consciousness within a local social network that existed in a region shaped by racial hostilities and strife.

Introduction

New Philadelphia is located about 25 mi. east of the Mississippi River, and it developed as a small multiracial rural community from 1836. It is the earliest known town legally founded by a free African American, Frank McWorter (Walker 1983). From the beginning of the town, both African Americans and European Americans purchased town lots, and the place attracted craftspeople, merchants, and laborers. The 1855 Illinois state census lists 58 people living in New Philadelphia (Walker 1983). The town's population peaked in 1865 with about 160 residents. Four years later, a railroad bypassed the town by about a mile, and people began to leave for larger cities, as well as migrate west of the Mississippi. About eight households and a blacksmith remained in 1900, and by the 1930s the town site was virtually abandoned. Throughout the town's history, from the 1850s through the 1920s, the African American population fluctuated between 25 and 35%, a significantly high proportion when compared to the surrounding township, county, and state (King 2007).

From 2004 to 2006, summer archaeological field schools helped to explore several house lots of the town's residents. One of the goals was to identify the similarities and differences among these various households. The archaeology team identified and excavated features that belonged to people of both European American and African American descent. Dietary (see T. Martin and C. Martin, this volume) and consumer material culture differences were expected among households of different regions, as well as differences correlating with racial categories. Archaeologists anticipated that the diverse settlers of varying backgrounds participated in a consumer society in different ways. How and why they participated in consumer culture was one of the initial project questions.

Identity studies concerning ethnicity, race, class, and gender drive much of historical archaeology scholarship today. The search for social identities in the past is complicated, because such definitions are malleable and never static. At times such identities can be somewhat elusive in the archaeological record, and in the case of New Philadelphia there was no clear relationship between social identities and consumer patterns.

Dell Upton (1996), in a keynote address at the 1996 Society for Historical Archaeology meeting, provided a useful description of the dilemmas in identifying ethnicity, finding authenticity, and uncovering invented traditions. He explained that defining group identity through the material signatures can become problematic if archaeologists see groups as never changing through time and space. Despite the important works by Eric Wolf (1982) and Marshall Sahlins (1985), which provide long-term histories and describe changing cultures, historical archeologists are often still tied to the idea of finding a particular ethnic identity through material culture as though these practices were embedded in static cultural systems (Upton 1996:1). Archaeologists have struggled to recognize the importance of historical processes and to move beyond the functional and systems approaches that dominated the discipline a generation ago.

Upton's (1996:2) critique of defining past ethnicity provides an important cautionary study. He described a book he edited in the 1980s in which the contributing authors illustrate ethnic architecture throughout the United States. The authors assume that the most exotic or most primitive represented the most ethnic manifestations of material culture. So when cultural traditions change, or when indigenous people stop using a particular architectural form, or stop using a particular object in everyday life, does that mean they are less ethnic, or their cultural practices are less pure?

There is a strong tendency to reduce ethnicity, or any other form of identity, to a list of traits and practices that can be isolated from the changes brought about by cultural interaction. Jones (1997:100) reminds us that "there is rarely a one-to-one relationship between representations of ethnicity and the entire range of cultural practices and social conditions associated with a particular group," however. Definitions of ethnicity by groups are constantly changing and continually being renegotiated. People change, groups interact, ideas and material culture are exchanged. Issues of domination and resistance can come into play, and issues of class should also be considered when examining such "signatures" of material culture.

Barbara Voss (2005:427–428) also points out that there are many archeological studies of Overseas Chinese communities that identify Asian cultural markers. The emphasis has been on acculturation and creating a visible opposition between Eastern traditions and westernization. While celebrating diversity and multiethnic heritage is important, archaeologists need to be careful about creating oppositions and developing heritage for any ethnic group with the idea that the archaeological assemblages are a product of a static community with a fixed identity. In fact, efforts to identify differences in the material culture used in everyday behavior in order to define group boundaries have often proven challenging. For instance, Voss (2005) explains that while many archaeologists have created oppositions to highlight differences between Overseas Chinese and Western cultures, there are also many cultural remains that are similar to those from non-Chinese sites. She notes Sherri Gust's work that shows how the faunal assemblages varied among Overseas Chinese

households. Gust (1993:208) observed that the butchering marks observed in the remains of some of the households reflected a "standard Euroamerican style" of food preparation. Baxter and Allen (2002:292–296) also show that the San Jose Chinese community had many economic ties to American manufacturers and distributors, thus potentially blurring any forms of easily identifiable cultural markers.

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, there has been a strong desire in American society to encourage a multicultural heritage. Group identity and boundaries are usually seen as being reinforced through the use of symbols. For instance, Stephen Brighton (2004) shows that smoking pipes found in a late-19th-century context in a section of Patterson, New Jersey known as Dublin, were powerful symbols. Some of these pipes had the Red Hand of Ulster design on them. The design helped to develop an identity among segments of the Irish American population, and had social value in their class struggle in both America and Ireland. It created a common language to solidify bonds within a particular group for a common cause.

A large proportion of work related to African American archaeology has been about the persistence of tradition. These studies have identified artifacts that have some association with, or exhibit memory of Africa, like cowrie shells, blue beads, and gaming pieces. The experience of slavery, and searching for power and identity have also dominated the literature (Singleton 1995; Orser 1998; Leone et al. 2005).

A relatively new genre has developed among those working on African American sites. Rather than searching for cultural markers and identifying oppositions, the emphasis in archaeological explorations focuses on social uplift, achievement, and diversity. These stories include the archaeology of the Underground Railroad (Levine et al. 2005), as well as survival and prosperity in a racialized and segregated society (Mullins 2004). These types of stories appear to have greater public support from the descendant communities (McDavid 2002; Leone et al. 2005).

The historical archaeology work at New Philadelphia follows in this new genre. It explores the everyday material culture of both African American and European American settlers of different racial and regional backgrounds, and different genders. The search for identity through

everyday material culture appears to be elusive, especially when looking at how race, ethnicity, class, and gender intersect. How people are defined, constrained, or enabled because of their social identity makes for a complicated scenario at New Philadelphia. Understanding the possibilities associated with social identity, along with the historical context of the place, helps to provide an understanding of this community in a new consumer society.

Goods and Migration to West Central Illinois

Illinois is a northern state with a majority of its early immigrants coming from the Upland South area, which includes Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland. The new Illinois residents from the Upland South were typically poor and white. By the early 1820s, northerners from the Middle Atlantic and New England regions, as well as other midwesterners, mostly from Ohio, began a steady migration to the area (Meyer 1980:99; 2000). The earlier settlers felt threatened by the invasion of northerners, and by free African Americans who would compete for similar resources (Tillson 1995:24–25; Simeone 2000:6). By the mid-19th century the majority of immigrants to the region were northerners.

Pike County, where New Philadelphia is located, is one only of two counties in Illinois bordered by both the Mississippi and Illinois rivers. In the first decades of the 19th century, material goods came from Pittsburgh, Wheeling, Cincinnati, and Louisville via the Ohio River (Davis 1998:133). After 1835, with advances in steam technology, both commerce and population boomed in the area. By 1840 the steamboat served all navigable waters. Soon thereafter, the national road and railroads were being constructed throughout Illinois. The state's population became very diverse as a result of these transportation routes, and residents had little trouble accessing consumer goods (Davis 1998:413).

The completion of the Illinois and Michigan Canal in 1848 created new ties to the north, and helped to transform the Midwest “from a southern nexus economy to a northeast orientation of agricultural exports and imported goods” (Taaffe and Gauthier 1973:54–58). The new canal connected Lake Michigan to the Illinois

River, and Illinois trade and migration shifted from a north–south orientation along the Mississippi River, to also include east–west movement, connecting the Midwest to New York and New England. By the 1850s railroad lines had expanded significantly, connecting Chicago and St. Louis to major East Coast cities. The transportation of goods and people became faster and easier (Conzen and Carr 1988; Ranney and Harris 1998).

Craftsmen and shopkeepers formed the core of New Philadelphia's economy, and they provided necessary services for the surrounding rural community. Communities like New Philadelphia were vital to the growth and development of the agricultural life of the region. From the 1850s through the 19th century, the U.S. federal census indicates that New Philadelphia had a mix of immigrants from the North and the Upland South. Those of midwestern and northern origins were the largest groups throughout the century, however (King 2007). In Hadley Township, where New Philadelphia is situated, the majority of residents were born in Illinois. Ohio was the second largest contributor of people to the area during the period from 1850 through 1880. Pennsylvania was the third largest supplier of immigrants to the area, until 1870 and 1880, when Missouri took its place (Seligman 2007).

Identifying Consumerism with Ceramic and Glass Vessels

The following archaeological analysis of ceramics and glass vessels is based on six features associated with five households. Three features are related to households whose members were from the North and date to the 1840s and 1850s, and three are linked to households from the Upland South and Illinois, and date to the 1850s, 1860s, and 1880s. A brief description of each household follows.

Spaulding Burdick Household (Features 7 and 13)

Feature 7, a pit cellar, and Feature 13, a well, date to the late 1840s and are associated with the Burdick family. The 1850 federal census lists the Burdick family as white. Spaulding Burdick is a 63-year-old male shoemaker who was born in New York. His wife Ann is 55

years old and born in Massachusetts. Their sons are both listed as born in New York.

David Kittle and John Sider Households (Feature 19)

Feature 19 measures 5 ft. north–south and 6 ft. east–west. It has five courses of dry laid stone and it extends to a depth of 2.8 ft. below the plow zone. The feature is associated with the Kittle family, and the fill dates to the 1850s. David Kittle is listed in the 1850 federal census as a 29-year-old merchant, living with Sophia, who is recorded as 29 years old. Both came from Ohio and are classified as white. No children are listed in the census. John and Augusta Sider owned this lot from 1858 to 1869, and the archeological assemblage there was probably created after John died in 1863 and the location may have been abandoned.

Casiah Clark Household (Feature 1)

Feature 1 is a small shallow pit cellar that measures about 5 × 5 ft. The material in the feature dates to the 1850s, and is associated with Casiah Clark's ownership of the lot. Casiah Clark had farmland in Hadley Township by the late 1840s, and she purchased a town lot from Frank McWorter in 1854. The 1850 federal census lists Casiah as head of household. She is classified as mulatto and originating from Kentucky. Her six children, ranging from 11 to 24 years of age, are listed as born in Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Virginia.

Sarah McWorter Household (Feature 14)

Feature 14 is a large cellar that measures about 18.6 × 16 ft. and is 2.7 ft. deep. The artifacts from this feature date mostly to the 1860s. Sarah McWorter is the most likely occupant of this lot during the 1860s. Sarah was Frank and Lucy's third child, and was also called "Sallie" (Walker 1983:160). She died in 1891, and her grave marker is inscribed, "She was the mother of six children" (Matteson 1964:33). Sarah shows up in the 1870 U.S. federal census records as a mulatto, age 60, born in Kentucky. She appears to be the head of household. While she conveyed some form of interest in the property in 1860, Sarah remained

responsible for tax payments on the property into the late 1860s. The value of the property decreased significantly by 1867, however, about the time that the cellar was being filled.

Squire and George McWorter Site (Block 3 Lot 7)

Block 3, Lot 7 contains a fieldstone foundation that was probably built after the Civil War. A layer of plaster is found throughout the entire area, a signature of demolition. The materials found below this layer date to the 1880s, while the materials above the plaster layer date to the early 20th century. McWorter family members Squire and George, owned this property in the 1880s and 1890s, and the archaeological assemblage is associated with them. George and Squire are Frank and Lucy's grandsons, and sons of Squire and Louisa who lived on Block 13. They are listed in the 1850 U.S. federal census as being mulatto, and born in Illinois. Their parents are from Kentucky.

Consuming Identity

A summary of the ceramic and glass vessels from features associated with different households provides a rather small data set for comparison (Tables 1–4). If the data is viewed as the presence and absence of vessels, however, a few observations can be made. First, each of the households participated in a consumer society. Glass and ceramic vessels are similar among the different households, indicating that they had similar access to markets, and they all purchased fashionable contemporary wares. All households had a relatively high proportion of medicine bottles, an indication of self-medication.

The use of the material culture varied slightly, however. For instance, some households preferred using only smaller plates. This phenomenon may be indicative of a dining style whereby plates were removed from the table after each course. In all likelihood it seems that this form of dining, known as dining *à la russe*, or *à la practical* in the hybrid American style, was practiced by some of the households. Other households had only large plates, suggesting one-course meals. Those households with the larger plates had a relatively larger proportion of bowls, suggesting the serving of stews, also

TABLE 1
CERAMIC VESSELS FOR TWO HOUSEHOLDS FROM THE NORTHEAST

Functional Category	Form	Burdick Household Feature 7		Burdick Household Feature 13		Kittle Household Feature 19	
		<i>N</i>	% of Form	<i>N</i>	% of Form	<i>N</i>	% of Form
Tableware	Plate 10 in.	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Plate 9 in.	0	0	3	15	5	22.7
	Plate 8 in.	0	0	1	5	0	0
	Plate 7 in.	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Plate 6 in.	1	14.3	3	15	0	0
	Plate 5 in.	1	14.3	0	0	0	0
	Plate 4 in.	0	0	2	10	4	18.2
	Plate (unid.)	5	71.4	11	55	13	59
	Total Plates	7	100	20	100	22	99.9
	Platter	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Flatware	1	25	3	75	1	14.3
	Tureen	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Pitcher	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Bowl	1	25	0	0	2	28.6
Holloware	2	50	1	25	4	57.1	
Subtotal	4	100	4	100	7	100	
Teaware	Cup	0	0	0	0	1	100
	Saucer	0	0	3	100	0	0
	Subtotal	0	0	3	100	1	100
Storage/prep.	Crock	3	100	5	55.6	1	50
	Bowl	0	0	2	22.2	1	50
	Jug	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Bottle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other holloware	0	0	2	22.2	0	0
	Subtotal	3	100	9	100	2	100
Other/unid.	Flowerpot	0		0		0	
	Chamber pot	0		0		0	

an indication of one-course meals. The use of larger plates conforms to a dining etiquette that shows a conscious selection of certain middle-class ideals (setting a proper table) and resistance to others (segmentation of the meal into many individual courses) (Lucas 1994).

While all of the households had refined ceramics, none of them had matched sets, even though mass marketing of consumer goods existed, and material goods could be easily accessed in Pike County by the 1840s. These

assemblages run counter to Victorian expectations for ceramic consumption, and are similar to what Paul Mullins found at African American sites in Annapolis (Mullins 1999:148). The ceramic assemblages in New Philadelphia were not acquired piecemeal in order to put together a larger and more complete set. The ceramic assemblages vary in color, decoration, and functional types despite the community having access to larger markets and participating in the consumer society. Nevertheless, they made

TABLE 2
CERAMIC VESSELS FROM THREE HOUSEHOLDS FROM THE UPLAND SOUTH AND ILLINOIS

Functional Category	Form	Clark Household		S. McWorter Household		S. and G. McWorter Household	
		Feature 1		Feature 14		Block3, Lot 7	
		<i>N</i>	% of Form	<i>N</i>	% of Form	<i>N</i>	% of Form
Tableware	Plate 10 in.	0	0	5	35.7	1	10
	Plate 9 in.	0	0	5	35.7	2	20
	Plate 8 in.	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Plate 7 in.	1	11.1	0	0	0	0
	Plate 6 in.	1	11.1	0	0	0	0
	Plate 5 in.	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Plate 4 in.	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Plate (unid.)	7	77.8	4	28.6	7	70
	Total Plates	9	100	14	100	10	100
	Platter	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Flatware	1	100	0	0	0	0
	Tureen	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Pitcher	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bowl	0	0	6	60	1	50	
Holloware	0	0	4	40	1	50	
Subtotal	1	100	10	100	2	100	
Teaware	Cup	3	42.9	3	37.5	2	50
	Saucer	4	57.1	5	62.5	2	50
	Subtotal	7	100	8	100	4	100
Storage/prep.	Crock	6	75	5	55.6	5	55.6
	Bowl	1	12.5	0	0	2	22.2
	Jug	0	0	1	11.1	1	11.1
	Bottle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other holloware	1	12.5	3	33.3	1	11.1
	Subtotal	8	100	9	100	9	100
Other/unid.	Flowerpot	0		0		0	
	Chamber pot	0		0		0	

choices about what they purchased and how they used the goods. Barbara Little (1994, 1997) explains how households in a consumer society acquire fashionable goods like ceramics as a cultural necessity. They may reject the meaning often associated with these objects, however, like the implied necessity for matched sets. In embracing the ideology of consumerism, these households embedded themselves in the market economy, and reinforced their roles in that economy as objectified individuals empowered

to sell their products and their labor (Palus and Shackel 2006).

In New Philadelphia, the meaning of the tea ceremony was probably different from that observed in urban areas. For instance, Diana Wall (1991) shows that in a mid-19th-century context in New York City, families belonging to the upper-middle class and lower-middle class used similar tablewares, and dinner probably had the same social meaning in both contexts. The wealthier family had more expensive porcelain

TABLE 3
GLASS VESSELS FROM TWO HOUSEHOLDS FROM THE NORTHEAST

Vessel type/container	Burdick Household Feature 7		Burdick Household Feature 13		Kittle Household Feature 19	
	<i>N</i>	% of Form	<i>N</i>	% of Form	<i>N</i>	% of Form
Liquor/whiskey	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beer bottle	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wine bottle	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-alcoholic	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beverage	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other bottle	0	0	0	0	1	10
Food (bottle or jar)	0	0	0	0	1	10
Medicinal	1	50	0	0	7	70
Chemical	0	0	0	0	0	0
Toiletry	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tumbler	1	50	0	0	1	10
Personal	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	1	100	0	0
Total	2	100	1	100	10	100

TABLE 4
GLASS VESSELS FROM THREE HOUSEHOLDS FROM THE UPLAND SOUTH AND ILLINOIS

Vessel type/container	Clark Household Feature 1		S. McWorter Household Feature 14		S. and G. McWorter Household Block 3, Lot 7	
	<i>N</i>	% of Form	<i>N</i>	% of Form	<i>N</i>	% of Form
Liquor/whiskey	2	18.2	2	6.7	1	5.6
Beer bottle	0	0	1	3.3	0	0
Wine bottle	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-alcoholic	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beverage	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other bottle	3	27.3	5	16.7	1	5.6
Food (bottle or jar)	0	0	6	20	4	22.2
Medicinal	5	45.5	11	36.7	8	44.4
Chemical	0	0	0	0	0	0
Toiletry	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tumbler	1	9.1	3	10	1	5.6
Personal	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	2	6.7	3	16.7
Total	11	100	30	100	18	100.1

teawares, however, while the poorer family tended to have cheaper ironstone teawares (Wall 1991:78). The New Philadelphia households participated in tea drinking, but with less-expensive ceramics. At New Philadelphia, like many other rural communities, status was likely acquired by personal character and landholding rather than through the display of material culture.

The ceramic and glass assemblages described for the five households vary somewhat. There is not a clear pattern of different uses of these artifact types when comparing African American and European American sites, however. There are also no clear differences when comparing households from northern states with those from the Upland South and Illinois. What is clear is that all of

these households have access to the market place. They are all buying the most fashionable goods, although not necessarily adhering to all of the rules of the consumer society, such as buying and using matched sets of dishes and tea wares.

Archaeology can counter preconceived notions about communities. By the time of the closing of the Illinois frontier in the 1840s, the region was well established and had access to eastern markets and goods. The archaeological data from the late 1840s through the 1880s show some signs of material homogeneity among the sites. Some of the consumer goods suggest that the New Philadelphia community did not necessarily develop as a collection of bounded, isolated, ethnic groups with each group having its own cultural and material traits, despite the widespread racial tensions in the area before and after the American Civil War.

This phenomenon appears to be true at other communities. For instance, Linda Stine's (1990) work in the North Carolina Piedmont, an area that followed the Upland South tradition, provides a comparison of a farming community that had a racial makeup similar to that of New Philadelphia. Almost 30% of the population was classified as African American at the turn of the 20th century. Differences between blacks and whites are difficult to discern in many forms of material culture. People of the same class, regardless of color, lived in similar types of homes. "For the most part area farmstead facades would not help an outsider predict a family's wealth, social status, or ethnic background" (Stine 1990:45). Residents in the community could purchase the same types of goods on credit or using cash. Comparing the archaeological assemblage of a site inhabited by an African American family and another occupied by a white family, both from the same economic stratum, she found no significant difference between them. The only reflections of inequality on the landscape are the separate cemeteries and segregated schoolhouses (Stine 1990:49).

Charles Cheek and Amy Friedlander (1990) discuss the archaeology of African American alley dwellings in Washington, D.C., and compare them to dwellings on a street inhabited by whites at the turn of the 20th century. Comparing the value of ceramics in the different assemblages, they found no significant difference in the relative value of each of the assemblages. They also did not find a clear difference in the

types of meats consumed by these households. They expected to see a greater number of bowls in the African American assemblage, but both assemblages are about the same (Cheek and Friedlander 1990:52–53). A few differences among the assemblages exist. For instance, the white households had a greater variety of glass tableware vessels, and the African Americans had more pigs' feet in their diet. These differences, however, are explained as ethnic differences, rather than economic and class differences. Pigs' feet are also common in assemblages associated with European Americans (Burk 1993), and are common in the Upland South diet (Martin and Martin, this volume).

Barbara Little and Nancy Kassner (2001:64) summarize other studies whereby ethnicity is not archeologically visible. For instance, in their study in New Castle County, Delaware, Wade Catts and Jay Custer (1990) describe an African American occupation from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Compared to other similar sites there is great variability in the assemblages, but all participated fully in the consumer culture. In their study in South Carolina, Melanie Cabak and Mary Inkrot (1997) also find that there is a poor correlation between ethnicity and material culture.

Gaming Pieces

The gaming pieces found at New Philadelphia may be associated with the game known as *mancala* (Figure 1). It refers to a large family of games based on distributing seeds, pebbles,



FIGURE 1. A SAMPLE OF GAMING PIECES FOUND THROUGHOUT NEW PHILADELPHIA. (IMAGE BY CHRISTOPHER VALVANO, 2006.)

pieces of ceramics and glass, or shells, into holes or cups. These gaming pieces have, until now, only been identified from African American sites, and mostly found near the quarters of enslaved people.

Mathematicians who study games often call the *mancala* family “sowing games.” *Mancala* is derived from the Arabic word *manqala* meaning “to move.” Also called *Adi*, *Adji*, *Awale*, *Awele*, *Awari*, *Ayo*, *Ayo-ayo*, *Gepeta*, *Ourin*, *Ourri*, *Oware*, *Wari*, *Warra*, or *Warri*, the game is played by distributing gaming pieces into holes or cups. The game developed about 4,000 years ago in the Middle East, and is also widely played in various regions of Africa. The boards, number of playing pieces, number of players, and rules of play vary greatly. The playing board may have two, three, or four rows of cups. These rows may contain anywhere from 5 to 36 holes. Some games require 10 playing pieces (usually seeds) per cup while others require only 4. To win, a player has to accumulate the most playing pieces, although some forms of the game require the winner to get rid of all of his playing pieces (Culin 1894). Individuals in various regions of Africa often played with pebbles or cowry shells, using hollows scooped into the earth or pecked into stone. They brought versions of the *mancala* game with them to the Caribbean and the United States during the 17th and 18th centuries, and evidence is mostly found close to slave quarters (Patten 1992; Samford 1994; Galke 2000; National Park Service 2005a). For instance, Susan Kern (2005) infers that several counting pieces found near slave quarters at Shadwell, the boyhood home of Thomas Jefferson, could have been used as *mancala* pieces. They were small pieces of worked and polished shell and ceramic that often served as markers for games.

Archaeologists have often associated gaming pieces with sites occupied by enslaved African Americans. Ethnographic information from the early 20th century indicates the long tradition of the game. Felix von Luschan (1919) mentioned *warra* being played in southern states and communities with large African American populations. Melville Herskovits (1932) wrote about *wari* being played on several different Caribbean islands. He mentioned that mostly men played the game, although there were no specific sanctions against females participating.

The typical *mancala* pieces found archaeologically are small, diamond-shaped objects fashioned out of broken ceramic and glass. These pieces are smoothed and worn around the edges from years of play (National Park Service 2005b). In New Philadelphia the gaming pieces are found at African American as well as European American sites. The pieces at New Philadelphia are mostly whiteware or yellow ware, with the former being the most common. All have a color on them, most being a remnant of the ceramic glaze, while a few had color applied to the earthen body. One is a worn piece of glass. All of the pieces are between 0.50 and 0.75 in. long. While these pieces have often been identified with enslaved sites, they are not a good cultural marker at New Philadelphia since they are found in free African American as well as European American sites.

Black and White Identity

The search for identity has a long tradition in archaeology. Today, ethnic interpretations of archaeological data are playing a role in contemporary conflicts, such as the Serbs' and Albanians' claims over the territory of Kosovo (Hakenbeck 2004:1). Historical archaeological studies related to ethnicity are often related to consumption and the marketplace. It becomes difficult to make predictable correlations between material culture and the created categories of ethnicity and race, however (Little and Kassner 2001:63). These categories are not natural, but rather created through power differentials (Williams 1992:608–612). Therefore, accessing race and ethnicity purely on the basis of material culture can be problematic. Material objects cannot be simple ethnic markers, although they can reflect ethnic significance if the meaning and the cues are known (Orser 2004).

Hall (1997:443) argues that identity is produced within specific historical and social conditions, and he describes the implications of looking for ethnicity based on skin color. He states:

The end of the essential Black subject is something which people are increasingly debating, but they may not have fully reckoned with its political consequences. What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category ‘black’; that is, the recognition that ‘black’

is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which has no guarantees in nature (Hall 1997:443).

In other words, cultural markers are always changing, and meanings are shifting depending upon sociopolitical contexts. Ethnic identities are not a given, and their fluidity can affect archaeological interpretations. Ethnic groups are not static, nor are they neatly defined and segmented into predetermined groups. Rather they should be understood as the social and/or political process of categorization (Vermeersch 2004:23).

Paul Mullins's work in Annapolis, Maryland serves as a fine example. His archaeology uncovered everyday consumer goods from all of the African American households. He provides an important view about finding expected ethnic and racial differences in the archeological record. Mullins builds a case to show that African Americans participated in consumerism as a strategy to confront racism. Consumerism has a symbolic appeal. It is empowering, and it allows people to participate in a type of consumer civil citizenship. This purchasing power was important to African Americans since they were excluded from American social and economic life. This work emphasizes that archaeologists should avoid any monolithic characterizations of black, especially when constructed by genteel whites (Mullins 1999:173).

When examining the historical records related to New Philadelphia, the creation of African American identity by the dominant group can be observed. For instance, one of the first county histories of the area reaffirms the subordinated position, or the "otherness" of African Americans. Chapman (1880) wrote that in the early 1830s a black man known as Bob went to the southern part of Pike County and wanted to marry a white woman, the daughter of Mr. Guernsey. The prospect of an interracial marriage upset many of the locals, and Chapman (1880:217) stated that the proposal "aroused the indignation of the whites, and as soon as he saw the citizens after him he took to his heels and ran away so fast the 50 men couldn't catch him!"

Chapman (1880:216–217) also described the early settlement of Hadley Township, where New Philadelphia was located. The McWorters were the first settlers in the township, and others joined them two years later. Another

county history explained that, "the first white man in Hadley Township was a colored man" (Thompson 1967:151). It was as though the historian had a template for writing the county's history, and had a difficult time crediting African Americans for their accomplishment. They were clearly seen as others and outsiders because of their skin color.

The story of Ansel Vond is an example of changing identity. Vond was a head of household, and lived on a farm adjacent to, and north of New Philadelphia. He first appears in the 1860 U.S. federal census, and he is classified as black. His wife Lucy Ann is listed as mulatto. In 1870 they are both classified as white. In the 1880 census, their color changes again, and they are listed as mulatto. Clearly each census taker saw the Vond family differently. The census records reflect the changing needs of whites to create otherness when describing people of color.

An 1862 newspaper account in the *Pike County Democrat* described the growing anti-African American sentiment in the county. A mass meeting of about 3,000 residents gathered at the Court House Square in Pittsfield. They passed a resolution expressing fear of African Americans invading the state, and the fear of white men potentially losing their jobs. One year later, the same newspaper wrote that they strongly opposed a war to "liberate the niggers" (Waggoner 1999:67,79).

New Philadelphia's population hit its peak by 1865, during Reconstruction, and began to decline steadily after 1869. Perhaps the Vonds, who had become well established in the community, were no longer seen as a threat, and perhaps they were able to "pass." By the 1880s, on the eve of Jim Crow, however, racism and prejudice were on the rise again, and the white census taker made sure to create distinctions based on color. At the turn of the century, sundown towns developed around New Philadelphia, towns where African Americans were not welcome after the sun had set (Loewen 2005). Oral histories (Christman, this volume) also indicate that the Ku Klux Klan was active in the area in the 1920s.

Sometimes there are strong relationships between ethnic identity and material culture, and items such as clothing, food, and other everyday materials signal meaning and identity. Goods

can create, enforce, and reinforce behavior. They can help maintain social boundaries and communicate through a whole set of clues which elicit appropriate behaviors (Bourdieu 1977). Goods may have different meanings in different social circumstances as their messages are continually changed and renegotiated. Goods can be used to justify and support different subgroups in society, or they can mask, contradict, or exaggerate social relations (Douglas and Isherwood 1979; Hodder 1982; Miller and Tilley 1984; Miller 1987; Rapoport 1990).

Archaeologists have recognized that cultural uniformity of material goods between groups may be an expression of within-group cohesion and competition, however (Hodder 1979:447, 1982:7). The case study from New Philadelphia, Illinois, a multiracial town that developed from the 1830s, shows that while people can be identified by race according to the historical records, identifying groups through their material culture becomes difficult. While different ethnic backgrounds, places of origin, gender, and occupation are considered, based on the comparison of consumer material culture, the households appear to be indistinguishable. The boundaries sometimes found in material culture seem to be blurred. Access to market goods appears to be similar among different households with very different backgrounds, and gaming pieces traditionally associated with African Americans are found in both white and black households. It also appears that all of the households rejected the Victorian ideal of matched ceramic sets.

While identity is something that is very fluid and always changing, households of very different backgrounds used material culture to create some form of group homogenization at the level of consumer goods. The sameness of the assemblages, and the rejection of Victorian ideals, contributed to what may be a type of group cohesion among people of different backgrounds. Differences existed in other areas, such as differences in landholding and livestock, personal wealth, access to government and law, and general stature in the community, among others. While archaeology of agency, and the focus on individuals and bounded groups has recently dominated research in the field, perhaps this work shows how different groups made decisions to act collectively in a rural community. The examination of material culture at

New Philadelphia helps to provide a scenario of how goods were used to shape and create a community in a racist society.

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