

or immediately thereafter remains unknown. I am certain that others wrestling with questions derived from specific chiefdom-related data bases will find important information, useful ideas,

and valuable theoretical positions in this strongly recommended volume.

General Anthropology (Inter-Subdisciplinary)

African-American Pioneers in Anthropology. *Ira E. Harrison and Faye V. Harrison*, eds. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999. 296 pp.

LEE D. BAKER
Columbia University

Faye V. Harrison and Ira E. Harrison (no relation) have compiled an invaluable volume that documents the courage, strength, and fortitude of the first African American scholars to explore the discursive terrain of anthropology—a terrain perhaps even more hostile to them than the Oregon territory was to the pioneers of the far West. *African-American Pioneers in Anthropology* is a stellar collection of 13 intellectual biographies documenting some of the most prominent black anthropologists this century. The book “aims to make more visible, to situate, and to consolidate the considerable interest in anthropology’s black ‘ancestors and elders’ ” (p. 6).

Some of the individuals featured are names that most anthropologists would recognize like Zora Neale Hurston, St. Clair Drake, and Elliot Skinner. Eugene E. King, W. Montague Cobb, or Katherine Dunham on the other hand may not be known as key figures in the history of American anthropology, but the reader quickly learns that these anthropologists emerged as key figures in American history. King played a critical role in desegregating public schools, Cobb was a leader in desegregating hospitals, and Dunham was literally center-stage in the effort to desegregate performance halls and public accommodations.

Although the intellectual biographies featured in this volume are quite diverse with regard to time period, area of expertise, and even subfield, each biographer underscores experiences of these pioneers that were quite similar: facing formidable obstacles prefigured by race, class, and gender, each pioneer used anthropology in different ways to understand, explain, and confront the very modalities that obstructed their ability to obtain appointments that enabled them to engage in sustained and funded research. Specific themes also emerge in the work and lives of these scholars that include the desire and ability to contribute to research, theory, and activism, a need to vindicate fallacious ideas about race and culture, and an expectation of participating in an older black intellectual tradition while contributing to a younger Boasian tradition in anthropology. Common patterns emerge as well, mainly career trajectories. Although these pioneers went to graduate school at places like Harvard, Columbia, and Chicago, they could not travel the road to success with their classmates, many of whom became faculty members at predominantly white research universities.

The first and second generation of anthropologists “were denied entrance into the fraternity of anthropologists because of the constraints of a racially segmented intellectual labor

market” (p. 11). Although that road was blocked to black anthropologists who practiced before the 1950s, these pioneers blazed their own paths to success as faculty and administrators at black colleges, researchers in the field of education, performing artists, school teachers, and professionals in government service.

Although some of the biographies focus more on the memorial, others are grounded in the contextual and make important contributions to the historiography of science. Gwendolyn Mikell’s piece on Zora Neale Hurston, Lesley M. Rankin-Hill and Michael L. Blakey’s piece on W. Montague Cobb, and Dallas L. Browne’s piece on Allison Davis offer a particularly nuanced and well informed contribution to the intellectual history of anthropological theory and the discipline. Moreover, the collective bibliographies of all of the essays offer an unprecedented source for scholars interested in the history of the field.

African-American Pioneers in Anthropology is not simply a collection of stories about the triumph and tragedy of black anthropologists, it is a veritable treasure trove that every anthropologist needs on the shelf. Faye V. and Ira E. Harrison make this case brilliantly in their powerful introduction that situates not only the book in a variety of contemporary discourses but these pioneers within the history of the field and the field within the transnational history of the United States.

The introduction is entitled “Anthropology, African Americans, and the Emancipation of Subjugated Knowledge.” While explicitly providing a historical and theoretical framework for these essays, it also does the work of inviting audiences that may not necessarily be interested in African American pioneers in anthropology to read the book. Citing an array of scholars including Arjun Appadurai, Michel Foucault, Sandra Harding, Renato Resaldo, and Cornell West, Harrison and Harrison frame this book by highlighting its contribution to border theory, subaltern studies, and the black intellectual tradition. Critical to their project is the effort to rehistoricize the field. Following Joan Vincent and others, the authors suggest that a critical history of the field should offer “skepticism, contextualism, processualism, criticism, and engagement” (p. 5).

The authors rightly argue that this book links up with “various critical anthropological projects—feminist, Marxist, post-Marxist, postmodernist, and indigenous—[that] are problematizing the boundaries and parameters that have historically demarcated hierarchized anthropological inquiry and investigation” (p. 1). With the goal of enriching and complicating anthropological analysis, they note how these biographies lay bare the way “anthropology, like all disciplines, is produced and reproduced in a wider order of power that hierarchically positions multiple knowledges by valorizing some and subjugating others” (p. 7).

While Harrison and Harrison seemingly invite readers from various audiences to engage these biographies, they fail to mention one important audience—teachers. This text will prove

invaluable to teachers who want to complicate the familiar histories of the field, which too often narrate a teleology of men who have built upon and eventually supplanted each other's theories. Put this book on your syllabus if you want to address the major theoretical developments *and* the legacy of racism and sexism and contributions to anthropology made by women and people of color. ♦♦

The Material Life of Human Beings: Artifacts, Behavior, and Communication. Michael Brian Schiffer with Andrea R. Miller. New York: Routledge, 1999. 158 pp.

BRYAN BYRNE
Tactics, LLC/Baffin, Inc.

Read this book very carefully. Think hard about its implications. Schiffer is creating a research program to explain human behavior. Although he calls his program a new science, it seems more like the rough outlines of a new research strategy; he is establishing epistemological principles, stipulating likely theoretical relationships, and crafting an investigative process that may interest professionals in disciplines that already deal with human behavior.

The inspiration for the research program springs from studies about what distinguishes humans from our evolutionary cousins. Schiffer realized that most of the theories and definitions ignored or downplayed the fact that we spend our lives "shaping and responding to material medium" (p. 4) in ways that suggest that "virtually all communication and human behavior involve artifacts" (p. 5). In response, he reconsidered the roles played by material objects and communication as defining characteristics of human behavior. He offers two tentative definitions of human behavior: it is "any [consequential] performance of a person" or, more expansively, "all interactions in a given behavior system" (pp. 27–28). There are three kinds of interactors: people, artifacts, and "externs"—those things that occur independently of people.

Schiffer argues that the processes of inferential theory building, familiar to archaeologists, can expose counterintuitive relationships among interactors. He adheres to materialist and behaviorist calls to investigate matter-energy relationships and to distinguish between stimulus-responses from interpretations of goals and intentions. Scientific observations and inferences should be grounded in the interactors' physical properties and spacio-temporal relationships. Their performances can be described according to characteristics and modes both singly and in aggregated sets of interactions called behavioral systems.

The inferences themselves should expose cognitive processes and their relationships to noncognitive phenomena. Having redefined human behavior, Schiffer is forced to reexamine his allegiances to behaviorist and cognitive psychology. By defining human behavior as consequential performance, Schiffer places problem-solving, hoping, praying, and rehearsing outside the bounds of behavior; while such phenomena may be real, they are not immediately consequential and, therefore, not behavior. That leads him to drop motivation, intention, goals, mind, and even culture from the list of behavioral concepts. Instead of adopting a radical behaviorist approach, Schiffer tries to

bridge the gap between stimulus and response by using multiple lines of evidence to draw inferences about the formation, selection, and tuning of tentative, contingent rules called correlons.

Consequently, Schiffer is compelled to dethrone conventional theories of two-party communication. Most conventional theories of communication emphasize the sender and speech performances. Schiffer offers a more encompassing theory by incorporating additional elements, adjusting time frames and levels of analysis, and proposing alternative relationships. In any communicative process, people, artifacts, and externs may occupy the roles of sender, emitter, and/or receiver. Often they perform multiple roles as events unfold. The communicative process itself includes four sequential events, inscription, emission, reception, and response. Schiffer shifts the theoretical weight from the sender to the receiver; it is the receiver of information who creates and/or modifies his/her own hierarchically organized correlons. Since people continually make inferences, respond, and are subject to the consequences of their behaviors, their correlons are selected for and/or against according to their ability to contribute to the individual's health and, perhaps, relative reproductive success.

Schiffer's general theory of communication is probabilistic. All of the existing studies that posit causal relationships between biological and sociodemographic variables and human behavior are inadequate, he argues, because they rely on proxy variables without specifying correlons that link stimulus and response. The only way to explain the relationships without this theory is to hold communicative processes, correlons, and performances constant and to assume that stimuli and responses conform to deterministic (p. 1:1) relationships. Schiffer objects and is trying to create a new research program by treating cognition, communication, and artifacts as causal variables in inferential, probabilistic theories of human behavior.

In retrospect, it makes sense that Schiffer developed this approach only after moving from research on site formation and inference to ethnoarcheological studies of consumer and industrial artifacts like radios and cars. By turning to ethnoarcheology, Schiffer directly confronted complex variables and relationships that cannot be easily detected in or inferred from archaic sites. Schiffer confronted issues that product developers consider in the conduct of their work. Product developers are people who invent, design, and manufacture things. Regardless of their intellectual heritages (from sociobiological to postmodern) and professional backgrounds (social sciences to industrial design to engineering), product developers *must* in some fashion consider the relationship between human and nonhuman behavior, situational contexts, objects, interactions, and meanings within and across groups. Schiffer found a way to craft general epistemological and theoretical principles that are relevant to the study of archaic sites as well as the creation of next year's artifacts, behavior, and communicative processes.

Having said that, we should proceed cautiously. The back cover of the book claims that Schiffer has folded elements of postmodernism into a scientific program that combines aspects of materialism, behaviorism, complexity theory, communications theory, and cognitive theory. Schiffer is pretty clear about the scientific components of his program. We can and should evaluate the efficacy of Schiffer's data language and general theory of communication. However, he has yet to elucidate the postmodern elements and their fit with his research program.