

EDITOR'S CORNER

Words matter. The way that we conceptualize, categorize, and label objects, entities, and processes influences the questions we ask and the way we approach answers.

This is well illustrated, in very different ways, by three of the articles in this issue. In a wide-ranging study across three continents, Peterson and Drennan examine the concept of “community.” They point out that this concept can be defined and recognized at different scales and offer methods of identifying communities in the archaeological record. Bernardini contrasts the concept of “cultural identity” with spatial units such as culture areas. Using data from the Southwest, he emphasizes the temporal as well as the spatial dimension underlying this concept. Silliman’s discussion examines the conflation of the terms “contact” and “colonialism” in North American archaeology. He argues that the confusion of these terms can mask many of the complex interactions between indigenous people and Europeans.

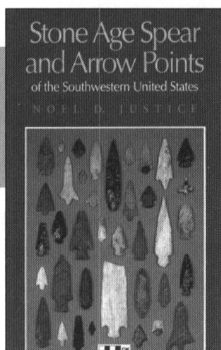
Theory also matters. Observed changes in the archaeological record might be interpreted in various ways, depending upon the explicit or implicit theoretical framework in which they are viewed. Changes in faunal proportions through time, for example, might be seen as the result of changes in environment, human demography, settlement organization, exchange, or ideology. Two articles in this issue tackle the issue of faunal changes from the standpoint of evolutionary ecology, emphasizing the cost-benefit ratios involved in the exploitation of different species. Ugan demonstrates, using

ethnographic information, that small animal procurement, even by mass harvesting techniques, is, in many cases, less efficient than hunting of large game. This finding has important implications for research into subsistence change and intensification. Wolverton examines data from two sites in Missouri to investigate the effects of climate change on foraging efficiency and prey choice.

These two sets of articles illustrate something that I would like to emphasize in future issues: the clustering of research around broad areas of topic, theory or method. *American Antiquity* is not (and probably should not be) a journal of thematically integrated issues. Nevertheless, it might serve well as an arena in which particular themes could be explored through more than one approach or in more than one area. I can imagine that two or three articles in an issue might fruitfully be “packaged” in this way. The April 2003 issue demonstrated this approach through a special section on “Mapping the Terrain of Americanist Archaeology,” which consisted of three articles solicited by the editor. I envision a slightly different approach, one in which potential contributors coordinate their submissions around a particular theme. Such themes could vary widely and include new views of exchange, abandonment, rock art, agency, or a myriad of other topics, new methodological approaches to such issues as intra-site patterning, survey, or compositional analysis, or contrasting theoretical viewpoints focused on particular debates. If any potential contributors are interested, I would encourage them to consult colleagues and contact me.

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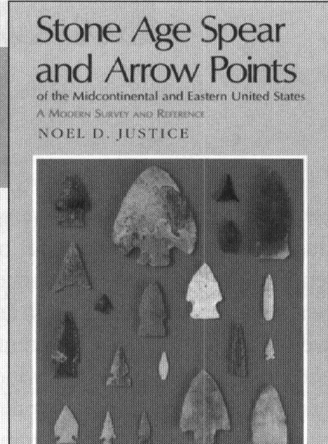
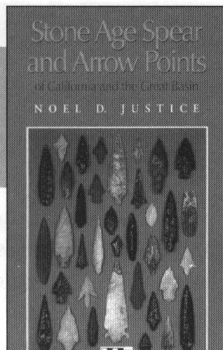
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