

# Introduction

## Pedagogy and Practice in Heritage Studies

SUSAN J. BENDER AND PHYLLIS MAUCH MESSENGER

How does teaching heritage fit into the context of conventional archaeology curricula? This is the central question with which the authors included in this volume are grappling. In exploring how to teach archaeology effectively, our authors interrogate with their students the link between contemporary understandings of the past and the present. Through this connection, they open the door to the study of heritage, where heritage is broadly construed as the process through which the past assumes diverse meanings in the present (compare Messenger and Bender 2019; see discussion below). Thus in this collection of rich, detailed case studies, we see common themes (or principles) and ideas emerge that can form the foundation for heritage study in North American archaeology. While lessons from our European colleagues (for example, Harrison 2013; Sørensen and Carman 2009; see also Chilton 2019; Cobb and Croucher 2019), who have a longer history with such considerations, can certainly guide our considerations, it is altogether fitting that American archaeologists craft answers out of the historical trajectory of their own professional tradition (including public archaeology; see Ashmore et al. 2010; Bender and Smith 2000; Lynott and Wylie 2000; Pyburn and Smith 2015). The work in this volume represents a project being constructed from the ground up, in which the everyday work of educators is helping us to characterize the theoretical and practical contours of heritage study (see also Zimmerman 2019).

In this enterprise, the contributors to this and a companion volume, *History and Approaches to Heritage Studies* (Messenger and Bender 2019), are in the midst of crafting a “grounded theory” of heritage study as de-

scribed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), characterized as a process that begins with an area of study and results in theory emerging from the data. They argue that grounded theories are more likely to resemble reality “because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action” (1998: 12). Indeed their observation defines precisely what we intend with these volumes. In other words, we hope not to offer a definitive statement on the scope and content of heritage study in archaeology, but rather to offer some insight into how educators are approaching this subject area in their classrooms, to enhance understanding of the range of subjects and activities that constitute heritage study, and to suggest productive avenues for developing our pedagogy into the future. To these ends, we have included in this volume case studies that help us think about pedagogical strategies across an arc of practice: they deal with everything from overarching learning theory and assessment considerations (Moe, White, and McGill), through ideas about curriculum and course design (Elia et al., Hayashida, Henderson and Laracuate, Kryder-Reid, Lerner and Efffland, Pluckhahn, Scham), to specific assignments (Bender, Messenger) that are aimed at stimulating students’ historical imagination as well as critical reflection about heritage.

Our authors approach teaching heritage from a multifaceted understanding of what that project entails. A number start with definitions of the heritage domain (for example, Hayashida, Kryder-Reid, McGill, Scham) that draw from scholars from both the European and U.S. traditions (Chilton 2019; Harrison 2013; Little and Shackel 2014; Logan 2012; Shackel 2019; Soderland 2009). Chilton, for example, argues that heritage “includes both tangible and intangible remains of the past and contemporary activities associated with those remains” (2019: 25). Other authors in these volumes infer heritage as an extension of the public archaeology project that “now considers a more diverse public, employs more democratic models of engagement, and reaches out through a wider variety of media and methods” (Pluckhahn: 74; see also Henderson and Laracuate, this volume; Clark 2019; King 2019). Still others consider heritage as “a way of thinking about the material remains of the past” (Elia et al., this volume), where the latter assumes meaning(s) through connection to contemporary cultural contexts. While not all might agree with Harrison’s assertion that heritage is a “repackaging of the past for some purpose in

the present” (cited in Zimmerman 2019), all would agree that heritage is constructed and malleable, that it is a portal for endowing the past with meaning, and that it points toward a more just future. As a group, the chapters in this volume argue that undergraduates come to our classrooms largely unaware of their relationship to heritage as “central to identity, to self-esteem and to daily life” (Zimmerman 2019: 216), and that our primary pedagogical project is to make students aware of their own heritage, even as they are in dialogue with the heritage of other peoples, past and present.

This theme—of connecting the past to the present and to the future—is initially identified by Moe and dominates the rest of this volume. Indeed, the words “connection” and “link” are probably the most repeated terms in the collection. Several authors argue that encouraging students to develop empathy for past and present actors is an effective pedagogical strategy for forging meaningful connections (Bender, Kryder-Reid, McGill, Messenger, Scham, White). Others would add that the process of building these connections can lead to critical reflection on contemporary cultural norms and invite students to engage with social and climate justice issues (Hayashida, Kryder-Reid, Lerner and Effland, McGill, Scham). Although not explicitly stated in all chapters in this volume, we suspect that all our authors would agree that an essential component of the heritage pedagogy project includes a commitment to the proposition that “learning about cultures, past and present, is essential for living in a pluralistic society and world” (Moe: 10).

Another type of connection that surfaces repeatedly in this volume entails actively connecting students to diverse stakeholders who are not usually part of the undergraduate classroom dynamic. A number of our contributors seek out opportunities to connect their students to local community groups, teachers in elementary school classrooms, and heritage managers, among others (Elia et al., Kryder-Reid, Henderson and Laracuate, Pluckhahn; see also Clark 2019; King 2019). In doing so, students experience directly the broader, varied meanings that stories about the past can assume and again are encouraged to assess critically who says what about the past and why, and what voices are dominant in this discourse. In this context, archaeology becomes a powerful tool for learning about the past through the systematic study of material remains, while it is embedded in a wider nexus of knowledge claims (compare Zimmerman

2019). The critical pedagogy that emerges from forging connections of all types promotes self-reflection, supports inclusive representation, and leads to community engagement.

Just as heritage study seeks to make students aware of diverse interests in the past, its pedagogy seeks to enable students to access knowledge about the past in multiple ways. Moe creates a framework for thinking about how students learn and argues persuasively for the importance of assessment in an iterative learning process that encompasses diverse modes of learning (see also McGill, Henderson and Laracuate). Building on this understanding, other chapters outline multiple strategies for encouraging students to learn about contemporary meanings of the past: case studies (McGill), role playing (McGill), ethnographic study (Kryder-Reid, Pluckhahn), applied anthropological techniques (Scham), construction of visual and verbal narratives (Bender, Messenger, White), exchange of student ideas and experiences (Hayashida), and a variety of “hands-on” experiences with educators and heritage managers—including internships (Elia et al., Henderson and Laracuate, Pluckhahn). The overarching theme in these various strategies is that heritage is taught most effectively through a pedagogy that demands student engagement, where critical understandings emerge as students apply concepts learned in one context to resolve problems in another, and their ability to do so attests to the learning that has taken place.

The engaged pedagogies represented in this volume break with traditional approaches to teaching about the human past in two fundamental ways. Conceptually, several contributors argue that approaching the past through the investigation of meaningful themes and questions provides a more effective framework for grasping the meanings of the past than the customary time/space systematics of culture history (Hayashida, Lerner and Efland, Scham). With regard to skills, other contributors (particularly those charged with teaching skills for the practice of public archaeology) make a strong case for expanding student learning beyond the traditional archaeological skill set to include aptitudes in writing or speaking for the public, developing interpretive signage, working collaboratively with community partners, or conducting fieldwork aimed at results other than professional publication (Elia et al., Henderson and Laracuate, Kryder-Reid, Pluckhahn). Of course, teaching conceptual knowledge cannot be neatly divided from teaching skills (see also Cobb and Croucher 2019).

The skills we want our students to practice proficiently flow directly from how we want them to conceptualize the past. Elia and his coauthors make this case when they observe that heritage management is as much a way of thinking about the past as it is a set of skills, and they measure the success of their field school on the evidence of their students “thinking that heritage values, preservation, and stewardship are just as integral to the practice of archaeology as using a trowel or tape measure” (108).

No monolithic answer to this volume’s central question—“where should the teaching of heritage reside in conventional archaeology curricula?”—emerges in this volume, and that is to be expected since we are, as Zimmerman (2019) would argue, still early in the process of understanding and building on the linkages among archaeology, heritage, and pedagogical theory. In a number of case studies, heritage understandings emerge out of assignments that in fact weren’t even initially designed to that end (for example, Bender, Hayashida, Messinger). The fact that they do suggests that there are many openings in current archaeology pedagogies to help students assess the many meanings of the past in the present, and to encourage them to reflect critically on the fluid nature of heritage claims. In contrast to these examples, several of our case studies illustrate how courses and field experiences can be explicitly designed around key aspects of heritage study, such as ethics education (McGill) or critical heritage studies (Kryder-Reid, McGill, Scham; see also Shackel 2019; Zimmerman 2019). Still other cases demonstrate how teaching archaeological practice can require that students come to understand archaeology as a profession that is embedded in a broader network of practitioners and publics, many with their own views of how the material remains of the past should be managed and interpreted. But what all these case studies share is a perspective wherein teaching about heritage is subsumed or framed by the archaeology curriculum. Hence we see from them how heritage might be fit into this extant structure. And, it is this “fitting in” that leads some authors to consider the knotty issue of the trade-off between teaching archaeology and heritage. For example, Elia and colleagues note the tension in their field school between teaching excavation skills (and getting work done) with finding time for teaching heritage management. Similarly, Pluckhahn explores the tension between teaching archaeological practice as cultural resource management and the rapidly expanding field of public archaeology.

If archaeologists are to teach effectively about heritage, such consider-

ations point to the next step in the project. We are tasked with rethinking our curricula so that students regularly engage increasingly sophisticated concepts of critical heritage study as they progress through our programs. In this way, many of the understandings that emerge in these two volumes might become standard aspects of archaeology curricula rather than sporadic encounters in individual courses. At introductory levels, students might encounter and apply understandings of the relationship between the past and the present and begin to investigate the multiple meanings with which the past can be endowed. In upper level courses, more critical study might be standard, resulting in students seeing the connections between the past and contemporary social and environmental justice issues. In courses that emphasize professional practice, students would encounter the range of interests and issues that heritage professionals might encounter in their work and, when tied to ethical considerations, the implications and consequences of their actions. The engaged pedagogies illustrated in this volume and demanded by this perspective would become standard classroom practice. Such revision would push the ethics-based curriculum envisioned in Bender and Smith (2000) to a new level of conceptual underpinning and move archaeology into dialogue with a broader field of heritage studies and its scholars and practitioners. By encouraging our students to understand how the past is used in the present to construct normative worldviews and visions of our future, we can endow our discipline with a voice that has the potential to have an impact on critical decisions in the communities we inhabit. In the vocabulary of the 1960s, embracing heritage study in our curricula can make archaeology “relevant” in the twenty-first century.

## References Cited

- Ashmore, Wendy, Dorothy T. Lippert, and Barbara J. Mills (editors)  
2010 *Voices in American Archaeology*. Society for American Archaeology Press, Washington, D.C.
- Bender, Susan J., and George S. Smith  
2000 *Teaching Archaeology in the Twenty-First Century*. Society for American Archaeology Press, Washington, D.C.
- Chilton, Elizabeth  
2019 The Heritage of Heritage: Defining the Role of the Past in Contemporary Societies. In *History and Approaches to Heritage Studies*, edited by Phyllis Mauch Messenger and Susan J. Bender, pp. 24–31. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.