

Lewis Roberts Binford (1930-2011)

Written by Claire Smith

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I am very sorry to inform you that Professor Lewis Binford, the scholar whose name evokes an entire intellectual movement within archaeology, has passed away. His optimism and intellectual fervor have been a major influence on several generations of archaeologists.

Lewis Roberts Binford was born on 21 November, 1930. He graduated from the University of North Carolina (Bachelors), and the University of Michigan (Masters and PhD). He produced over 150 publications in the last 50 years, many of which became seminal papers in archaeological theory and method. His most influential publications span more than four decades, and include:

- 1962 *Archaeology as Anthropology*, *American Antiquity* 28:217-225.
- 1968 *New Perspectives in Archaeology*. Co-edited with S.R. Binford, Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago.
- 1978 *Nunamiut Ethnoarchaeology*. Academic Press, New York.
- 1981 *Bones: Ancient Men & Modern Myths*. Academic Press, London.
- 1983 *In Pursuit of the Past*. Thames and Hudson, London.
- 1989 *Debating Archaeology*. Academic Press, New York.
- 2001 *Constructing Frames of Reference: an analytical method for archaeological theory building using ethnographic and environmental data sets*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- 2004 *Ethnographically Documented Hunter-Gatherer Peoples: A Baseline for the Study of the Past*. Princeton UP, Princeton.

Lewis Binford was a pioneer in the 'New Archaeology' movement of the 1960s. His vision for a scientific approach to archaeology led the discipline away from the cataloguing of cultural histories to the use of scientific methods aimed at explaining cultural processes and site formation processes. Binford's academic career was based at the University of New Mexico and subsequently at Southern Methodist University. He was an inspiring, committed researcher and a kind and generous teacher. Just as we were intellectually enriched by his existence, so we are intellectually poorer through his passing. He was was one of archaeology's great minds.

Lewis survived by his daughter, Martha, and his wife and co-researcher, Amber Johnson.

WAC will publish an obituary in the near future.

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Sincerely,

Claire Smith

President of World Archaeological Congress

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[Read the Lewis R. Binford's obituary in *The Telegraph*](#)