

Career Arcs: Identity, Oppression, and Diversity in Archaeology

Book Proposal, Routledge Archaeology of Gender & Sexuality Series (Pamela L. Geller, editor)
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Abstract

Career Arcs: Identity, Oppression, and Diversity in Archaeology addresses two major issues. First, I use an intersectional, qualitative study to document how racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism affect the demographics of archaeology. Second, I discuss how knowledge that archaeologists produce is shaped by the discipline's demographic homogeneity. In-depth, semi-structured interviews with over 70 diverse archaeologists have proven insightful about the discipline's diversity (or lack thereof) and its production of knowledge about the past. These researchers' personal narratives, as I discuss, demonstrate that intersecting systemic oppressions shape who enters archaeological careers, the opportunities and hurdles they encounter, and the research archaeologists pursue. Archaeologists are predominantly straight, cisgender, white, nondisabled, from middle-class backgrounds, and, when in positions of power, men; these homogenous demographics ultimately limit knowledge that archaeologists produce about past human societies. I offer strategies for marginalized archaeologists to build successful careers and for established scholars to support the creation of a discipline as diverse as the past peoples we study.

Statement of Aims

Career Arcs explores two overlapping themes. First, it examines how intersecting systems of oppression (racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism) shape who conducts archaeological research. Previous research has shown that, like many academic fields, archaeology is numerically dominated by straight white cisgender people, and those in positions of authority are predominantly men (Bardolph 2014; Association Research, Inc. 2016; Fulkerson and Tushingham 2019; Heath-Stout in press). This book examines how and why those demographic trends persist. Second, *Career Arcs* elucidates how individual archaeologists' social identities shape the research they conduct, and therefore, how our demographics affect and limit our knowledge production on a disciplinary scale. Unlike previous reflections on archaeological careers, which focus on the authors' individual experiences (e.g., Prentiss 2012; Nelson 2015), this book incorporates short interludes of memoir into a systematic qualitative study of the recorded stories and insights of over 70 archaeologists. I demonstrate the manners in which sexism, heterosexism, classism, racism, and ableism pervade all aspects of archaeological careers and research. I also explain how, through unflinching reflection, proactive policy-making, and sincere community-building, we can build a diverse and inclusive discipline.

Detailed Synopsis and Chapter Summaries

The structure of the book loosely follows the path of an archaeologist through their career. Following an introduction that introduces the project, my theoretical background, and my methods in Chapter 1, I begin the body of the book with a chapter on "origin stories," or the beginnings of archaeological careers. In each of the succeeding chapters, I explore one concept that helps us understand multiple types of oppression. Chapter 6 examines the untimely ends of archaeologists' careers due to marginalization, complementing Chapter 2's focus on recruitment and bringing the arc of the archaeologist's career to a close. *Career Arcs* concludes with two chapters of discussion that

synthesize the previous chapters by discussing the implications of these systemic problems for the production of archaeological knowledge (chapter 7) and providing suggestions for how individual archaeologists, academic programs, research projects, and professional organizations can take concrete steps to build a more diverse and inclusive archaeology (chapter 8). This conclusion is followed by an appendix, containing details about my methodology that would detract from the text's flow.

In the body chapters (chapters 2–6), one of the forms of oppression is used to introduce the concept; then, the concept is discussed with reference to the other forms of oppression under study; finally, the concept is explored with reference to the intersections between multiple identities. Each chapter also includes vignettes presented in the interviewees' own words. Placed at the beginnings of sections of text, these vignettes illustrate and introduce the concept being described, and allow readers to get to know a variety of archaeologists and understand how each system of oppression can affect an individual scholar's life. Each chapter also includes a section of personal reflection (starred below), in which I unpack how my own set of privileges (cisgender, white, upper-middle-class) and marginalized identities (woman, queer, dismay mom bled) has shaped my career. By sharing my own stories, I engage in the feminist practice of reflexivity, allowing the reader to see how my own identities and experiences have informed the research and writing presented in the book.

1. Introduction

HEADINGS: How Does Archaeology Stay So Homogeneous?; The Demographics of Archaeology; Interviewing Archaeologists; Intersecting Identities; The Path through an Archaeological Career; How Can I Be an Archaeologist?*

DESCRIPTION: After an opening reflection, the introduction lays out the main argument of the book. Next comes a brief review what is known about the demographics of archaeology from quantitative studies, followed by an introduction to the study methods. Then, I set the stage for the following chapters by providing a brief introduction to the frameworks I use for understanding identity, systemic oppression, and intersectionality, in order to address some common points of confusion right at the beginning. In repudiation of anthropology's racist and colonialist history, some anthropologists and archaeologists balk at using the word "race." Yet, racism is nonetheless present in our discipline. This chapter includes a frank discussion of these issues, making clear that by criticizing racism in the discipline, I am neither espousing the idea of race as a biological fact nor attributing that belief to my colleagues, but rather exposing how systemic social inequality is manifested in the discipline. The chapter concludes by laying out the structure of the chapters going forward, and with a personal reflection on my motivations for writing about these topics.

2. Discovering Archaeology

HEADINGS: Little House in Upper-Middle-Class Suburbia*; Indiana Jones, Historical Fiction, and Other Media; Discovering Archaeology in the Middle-School Classroom; Site Visits and Museum Trips; High Schoolers in the Field; "Is This Something I Could Do?" College Courses; The "Defining Experience of Fieldwork; Conclusion

DESCRIPTION: The body of the monograph begins as each interview did, with the beginnings of archaeological careers. The chapter lays out the different ways people first encounter archaeology and then decide to pursue a career in the field. I also examine how these experiences and choices are shaped by socioeconomic class and other forms of inequality. High-

socioeconomic-status archaeologists were much more likely than their working-class colleagues to have encountered compelling information about archaeology before entering college, whether in the form of school curricula, museum or site visits, or high-quality media. Less privileged archaeologists were more likely to discover a passion for archaeology in a college classroom or a field school, which is paradoxical considering the high monetary costs of entering these spaces. “Discovering Archaeology” demonstrates that the imbalances in disciplinary demographics begin with recruitment, and that all paths into archaeology are more accessible to wealthy people.

3. Microaggressions and Macroaggressions

HEADINGS: The Spectrum of Abuse; Who Carries Buckets?; Sexual Harassment and Assault; “Take Me Home in Your Suitcase”*; The Spectrum of Abuse Beyond Sexism

DESCRIPTION: If an archaeologist succeeds in entering a field project or archaeological career, they may not find a welcoming, safe, and supportive work environment. Chapter 3 introduces the spectrum of abuse, ranging from microaggressions to outright violence. Because my women interlocutors were so thoughtful and eloquent on the spectrum of abuse, this chapter uses examples of sexism and sexual violence against women to introduce the concept. Following this introduction is an exploration of how the spectrum manifests differently with regard to race, sexual orientation, ability, and class, as well as sexual violence against men. Because sexual violence was so much more common than other forms of violence, the spectrum has a broader reach for sexism than for other systemic oppressions. Finally, I explore how these abuses intersect with each other, for example, how sexual harassment is experienced differently by straight and queer cisgender women due to their experiences of sexual orientation.

4. The Cognitive Burden of Marginalization

HEADINGS: The Cognitive Burden of Marginalization; Balanced in the Closet Doorway; Is it Homophobic to Yell “¡Puto!”?*; Disclosing Disability; Other Cognitive Burdens

DESCRIPTION: As a marginalized archaeologist continues to work, the weight of navigating unwelcoming and even abusive work environments accumulates, taking mental and emotional energy to manage. This chapter examines the concept of the “cognitive burden of marginalization,” which I first theorize with reference to the experiences of queer archaeologists, who must constantly negotiate questions of disclosure, balancing the safety of remaining closeted with the freedom of coming out, while simultaneously navigating others’ assumptions of heterosexuality or guesses of non-straight identities. This difficult situation requires energy and attention that straight cisgender archaeologists may direct into work or recreational pursuits. Rampant ableism in the academy and in archaeology specifically leads to a dearth of overtly disabled archaeologists; most disabled archaeologists have non-apparent disabilities, which means that we navigate analogous tensions around disclosure and the cognitive burden of marginalization. Literature from disability studies (e.g., Samuels 2003; Kafer 2013) is used to theorize the differences and similarities between queer and disabled closeting and coming out. The chapter concludes with a comparison of how the cognitive burden varies for people with more or less visible marginalized identities.

5. Mentors and Communities

HEADINGS: An Academic Family Tree of Black Feminist Archaeologists; The Society of Black Archaeologists; The Feminist Accomplice; Mentored by a Straight White Nondisabled Middle-Class Cisgender Man*; Intersectional Communities

DESCRIPTION: For marginalized archaeologists to succeed in their careers despite barriers to entry, abuse, and the cognitive burden of marginalization, they need support from mentors and communities. Black interviewees were particularly vocal on these points: most were intertwined in the same academic family tree of mentors and students, connected to trailblazing Black feminist archaeologist and tireless mentor Maria Franklin (1997; 2001). Further, the Society of Black Archaeologists has brought together Black and African American archaeologists into an organized community, which has helped many of its members succeed. These stories make clear the importance of mentors and communities in retention and success, both for archaeologists of color and for other marginalized archaeologists. A variety of stories of excellent mentorship and community building across identity lines provide models for readers to emulate.

6. Pushed Out

HEADINGS: The Belizean Horror Story; Unenforced Policies*; Starting Over; The Ex-Archaeologists

DESCRIPTION: Not all archaeologists have long and successful careers in the discipline. Although only one interviewee had actually left the discipline of archaeology, the possibility of quitting hung over many who were graduate students, contingent academic laborers, or job searching. Even if they ardently wished to continue archaeology careers, they were unsure if they would be able to find secure employment. Beyond the economics of higher education, there were other reasons to leave, like sexual harassment and racist bullying. In fact, many marginalized interviewees had quit some part of archaeology, whether a field project, a regional focus, or a technical specialization, in order to escape mentors or peers who had mistreated them. While they were usually successful in leaving behind particular abusers, re-starting a career with a new research focus was difficult and time-consuming, and sometimes they found further abuse in their new fields. This chapter completes the arc begun in Chapter 2, which focused on recruitment, by exploring retention. By learning how and why archaeologists are not retained in particular subfields, we can rethink how to nurture talented people in following their passions rather than pushing them out and making them worry about their safety more than their interests.

7. Interests, Opportunities, and Reflexivity

HEADINGS: Interests and Opportunities, Mentors and Networks; Discovering Tlaxcala*; Who Studies Whom?; Reflecting on the Archaeologist's Standpoint

DESCRIPTION: This synthetic chapter examines how the problems discussed previously shape the knowledge that archaeologists produce. Individual interests and available opportunities, mediated by mentors and professional networks, shape research trajectories. Although self-awareness about the influence of oppression varies, all scholars' careers are shaped by these systems, and refusing to acknowledge that is a way of reinforcing inequalities. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the limitations of our knowledge about the past, informed by feminist standpoint theory, and a call for reflexivity for all archaeologists.

8. Conclusion: Systemic Changes

HEADINGS: Public Archaeology; College Classrooms; Field Schools and Research Projects; Academic Departments; Sunday Morning, 8am, in a Tiny Room*; Professional Organizations

DESCRIPTION: After eight chapters diagnosing and explaining the problems in archaeology, the book ends on a positive note by highlighting all the good work already being done to diversify the discipline, from free field schools to improved sexual harassment policies to mentorship programs. The book concludes with suggestions for archaeologists to implement in a variety of professional contexts in order to contribute to systemic changes leading to a more diverse and inclusive discipline..

Appendix: Methods

HEADINGS: Recruitment; Consent; Interviewing; Anonymity; Coding and Analysis

DESCRIPTION: The appendix comprises a detailed description of the methods used, the details of IRB approval, recruitment and consent scripts, and the full list of questions that guided interviews. This information will be useful for the reader most interested in methodological questions, but would make the book less readable if it were included in the main text.

Target Market

This book is intended to appeal to three primary audiences. First, it will be relevant for archaeologists who have an interest in diversity and inclusion within the discipline, whether or not their research is focused on these issues. Archaeologists are growing increasingly concerned with inclusion, especially in the wake of controversies at the 2019 annual meetings of the Archaeological Institute of America and Society for Classical Studies (Flaherty 2019a) and the Society for American Archaeology (Flaherty 2019b). Scholars with a wide variety of research specializations will be interested in reading the book in order to reflect on how they can participate in building a more inclusive discipline. Because of its focus on academic archaeology in the United States, the book will be relevant to a wide variety of archaeologists, including members of the Society for American Archaeology, the Archaeological Institute of America, the Society for Historical Archaeology, and the American Anthropological Association.

Second, the book will be of interest to scholars who are engaged in research on diversity in academia. The socio-politics of archaeology have been under study since Gero's (1985) seminal publication on the topic. Literature on gender equity and sexual harassment in archaeology has especially flourished in recent years (e.g. Bardolph and Vanderwarker 2016; Goldstein et al. 2018; Meyers et al. 2018; Fulkerson and Tushingham 2019; Heath-Stout 2020). Outside of archaeology, there is an extensive literature on inequities in higher education (e.g., Ahmed 2012; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012; Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden 2013; Dolmage 2017; Moreno, Quinn-Sánchez, and Shaul 2018). Accordingly, this book will be an important addition to this lively conversation. Furthermore, I engage with the literature of feminist standpoint theory, which explores how a thinker's identity shapes their knowledge (e.g., Harding 1986; 2015; Haraway 1988; Crasnow 2009; Intemann 2010; Wylie 2012). *Career Arcs* provides a case study of how identity shapes academic archaeologists' career paths and research interests.

This exploration of career paths will make my book relevant to a third audience: upper-level undergraduate and graduate archaeology students. The monograph will be written in an approachable and accessible style, making it appropriate to be assigned in courses on archaeological methods and theory, feminist archaeology, social archaeology, and professional development in archaeology. Through the stories of my interlocutors, I provide readers with a variety of examples of both adversity and success that can inform their own approaches to their careers. I envision the book as being especially useful to women, students of color, queer students, disabled students, and students from lower class backgrounds. Because their mentors

and role models may not share these identities, students will see that they are not alone and learn from the strategies and successes of those who came before them as represented by the stories in the book. As a queer disabled woman student primarily mentored by straight nondisabled men, I would have loved to read a book like this one.

Competing Titles

The leading title on intersectional feminist archaeology is Whitney Battle-Baptiste's (2011, Left Coast Press/Routledge) *Black Feminist Archaeology*. She presents a detailed argument for how Black Feminist theory can be applied to archaeology, using three African Diaspora sites in the United States as case studies. Although we share an interest in reflecting on our own experiences and perspectives and a theoretical foundation in intersectional feminism, Battle-Baptiste and I conduct very different research: hers focuses on African American lives in the past and mine focuses on archaeologists' experiences in the present. Anna Marie Prentiss's (2012, University of Utah Press) *Field Seasons* is a reflection on the author's career path and development as a scholar. I share Prentiss's goal of elucidating the various possible paths through the discipline for student readers. Similarly, Sarah Milledge Nelson's (2015, Left Coast Press/Routledge) *Shamans, Queens, and Figurines* tells the author's own career story, compiling essays on gender-related topics from throughout her career and alternating them with autobiographical reflections. In all three of these books, feminist authors deeply investigate their own career paths and research trajectories, and Battle-Baptiste and Nelson pay particular attention to how systems of oppression like sexism and racism shaped their research. My book deals with these themes, but is much broader, incorporating the stories of over seventy archaeologists to expose the larger patterns in archaeological career paths.

Format

I envision the book as consisting of 8 chapters, each between 7,000 and 10,000 words long, as well as approximately 5,000 words in a methodological appendix, yielding a total word count of approximately 75,000, not including references. There are approximately 10 tables, most of which are in the introduction or appendix. The final manuscript will be submitted by July 31, 2021. Much of the research in the book was previously discussed in my unpublished dissertation (Heath-Stout 2019). Several of my journal articles and manuscripts under review have used data from the dissertation to explore elements of classism (Heath-Stout and Hannigan 2020), ableism (Heath-Stout under review, "The Invisibly Disabled Archaeologist"), and heterosexism (Heath-Stout under review, "The Archaeologist and the Closet") in archaeology. All of these articles are relatively short, so although they address similar topics to chapters 2 and 5, the monograph is a much more detailed and nuanced treatment. Furthermore, this book represents an expanded study, including interviews conducted after the completion of the dissertation.

Suggested Academic Referees

Dr. Dana Bardolph, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Northern Illinois University
(dbardolph@niu.edu)

Dr. Whitney Battle-Baptiste, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts Amherst (wbbaptiste@anthro.umass.edu)

Dr. Kathryn Clancy, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (kclancy@illinois.edu)

Dr. Laurie Wilkie, Professor of Anthropology, University of California Berkeley
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