

## Initial Information

**Workshop title:** Beck, Jessica (U. College Dublin) "The Socio-Politics of Knowledge Production in Archaeology and Anthropology"

**Requested funding (in US\$):** 5000.00

**Start date:** 2023-10-10 00:00:00

**End date:** 2023-10-13 00:00:00

### Workshop abstract:

This workshop brings together researchers investigating knowledge production—how scholars enter the academy and develop and disseminate their research—to examine how the existing structure of higher education shapes who becomes an anthropologist and what research is considered meaningful. Our participants are drawn from across archaeology, biological anthropology, and cultural anthropology. This group of scholars is at the forefront of research on equity and knowledge production, and employs a wide variety of quantitative and qualitative methods, including quantitative and qualitative surveys, social network analysis, citational analyses, ethnography, and archival research. Several participants are also leaders of practice, developing collaborative, community-based research and experimenting with innovative ways to distribute results to the public and the archaeological community. Still others are directly involved in activist work for change, including leaders of the Black Trowel Collective, the Society of Black Archaeologists, the Indigenous Archaeology Collective, and the Disabled Archaeologists Network. A core goal of this meeting is to develop and disseminate resources for anthropologists committed to increasing the inclusivity and impact of anthropological research, including best practices guidelines, course syllabi, and bibliographies, which will be made available on a multi-modal website.

**Please list the country location(s) where this project will be carried out:**

Virtual (to make workshop more equitable, please see application for detailed rationale)

## Funding and Grants

**Who will administer the workshop?:** Jess Beck and Laura Heath-Stout

**Who will handle the disbursement of funds?:** Jess Beck

**Please describe the sponsoring institution or organization and outline its role:** There is no sponsoring organization.

**What other sources of aid have you received or requested for this conference?:** None.

**Have you ever received a Wenner-Gren Foundation grant?:** false

## Coding

**Subfield:** ARCHAEOLOGY

**Geographic region:** Other

## Longform Questions

### Workshop Description Question 1

**What is the rationale for the workshop? What are your aims and objectives in holding the event? Address the current status of research on the topic and theme, the particular need for a workshop at this time and with these participants, and the meeting's potential contribution to anthropology. Also, please help describe the international scope of your proposed workshop by detailing the number of participants you plan to invite along with their geographic location.**

The discipline of anthropology encompasses the entirety of what it means to be human, yet research consistently demonstrates that the composition of the field is remarkably restricted in terms of race, gender, class, disability, sexual orientation, and academic genealogy. Entry to academic anthropology is likely to contract in the coming decade given growing precarity in the academy. Across disciplines, there is an inverse relationship between the number of PhDs granted and the number of tenure-track jobs available. The crisis in higher education exacerbated by the 2008 recession shows few signs of abating, particularly given the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. To confront these challenges, this workshop will bring together scholars investigating the socio-politics of knowledge production in archaeology and anthropology to examine how the structure of the discipline affects the direction and dissemination of research and the reproduction of academic power structures.

These issues are not new. Archaeologists have discussed these dynamics since *The Socio-Politics of Archaeology* (1983) tracked the underexplored intersections between history, ideology, and epistemology within the field. Despite the authors' consensus on the necessity of greater disciplinary reflexivity, the problems that the volume identified—particularly the ways that the field is enmeshed in larger social, political, and economic systems—still confound us four decades later. In the last fifteen years, however, scholars from all subfields of anthropology have renewed research on the dynamics of knowledge production, focusing on three dimensions of practice: recruitment and pedagogy, data collection, and data dissemination.

Acknowledging the multi-generational nature of these challenges, the session will foster conversations between early-career, mid-career, and senior scholars from a range of institutions. While the session emphasizes archaeology due to the long-standing interest in these issues within this subfield, researchers investigating the ideological entanglements of knowledge production come from all areas of anthropology, a theoretical diversity that is well-represented by the proposed participants. Because it would be impossible to create guidelines for best practices that would apply to anthropology in all cultural contexts, we have focused primarily on North American anthropology, although proposed participants conduct international research and represent the diversity of approaches in North American anthropology.

We have two objectives in organizing this workshop. The first is to bring together the anthropologists conducting research on knowledge production to foster conversation, collaboration, and novel insights. Because knowledge production research is not regionally or methodologically restricted and spans all subfields, there are few other opportunities to connect the diverse scholars conducting this research. Rather than simply rehashing problems that have been identified for decades, the second goal of the session is to begin developing strategies for increasing the inclusivity and accessibility of anthropological research. Workshop participants will collaboratively develop resources—such as guidelines for valuing open access publications at the departmental level, data-sharing templates, model policies for safe field schools, and principles for effective community outreach—that will be disseminated on a publicly available website. The workshop will advance our scholarly understanding of knowledge production issues while also developing practical approaches to building a more equitable and just discipline.

## **Workshop Description Question 2**

### **What are the specific topics to be discussed?**

We propose to bring together scholars employing a wide variety of approaches to examine issues of inequality and knowledge production in anthropology and archaeology. Participants have conducted empirical studies on the demographics and practices of anthropology using multiple different methods, including quantitative and qualitative surveys, social network analysis, examinations of citational politics, ethnography of archaeological sites, and archival research. Several invitees have been leaders of practice, including practitioners of community-based research and scholars experimenting with innovative ways to distribute research. Still others are directly involved in activist work for change, including leaders of the Black Trowel Collective, the Society of Black Archaeologists, the Indigenous Archaeology Collective, and the Disabled Archaeologists Network; we also invite diversity advocates within biological anthropology. By bringing together a range of scholar-activists working to evaluate obstacles to equity and accessibility, this symposium will generate a holistic understanding of how the organization of the discipline affects the direction and dissemination of research and the reproduction of deeply rooted power structures within the academy.

We conceptualize the workshop as having three broad themes. First, researchers have surveyed the demographics of academic anthropologists, mapping long-standing problems of representation among students and faculty, exploring how race, class, gendered disciplinary culture, and institutional prestige structure the networks that impact opportunities within the academy. Second, scholars have begun to examine how anthropological data is collected, focusing on the often-invisible contributions of local fieldworkers and the pervasive problems of sexual harassment in professional contexts. Finally, a growing number of studies have focused on the dissemination of anthropological research, examining trends in authorship, citational practices, grant-funding, open science, and data sovereignty, as well as the ethical implications of our field's integration with the for-profit scholarly publishing industry and our relationship to the broader academy.

The session will not only examine these structures themselves but will also investigate ways to disrupt them. Recent studies on the pervasive nature of sexual harassment in fieldwork contexts have combined quantitative research with the proactive development of structural policies that can be implemented to combat persistent power imbalances. Similarly, guidelines for data sharing, open science, and data sovereignty have also been developed. This work, emerging only in the last few years, provides a template for conducting research that is both rigorous and socially meaningful. The symposium will aim to develop similar strategies and solutions that can be used by scholars experiencing different levels of professional precarity in contexts including field projects, labs, departments, professional organizations, and editorial boards. We expect that unanticipated interventions will emerge organically through the discussion and collaboration fostered by the diverse scholars participating in the symposium.

### **Workshop Description Question 3**

#### **How will the event be structured? Describe the conference length and general format.**

We selected a virtual format for our workshop for four interrelated reasons: (1) a virtual workshop allows greater flexibility for individuals who cannot travel due to care responsibilities, disability, or work obligations; (2) a virtual forum acknowledges that we are still in the midst of a global pandemic, and does not require scholars to take a calculated health risk in order to participate; (3) a virtual meeting is ecologically responsible as it avoids the carbon emissions generated by air travel; (4) a virtual format is efficient as it eliminates travel time for participants.

The workshop will be held over a four-day period from Tuesday, October 10 to Friday, October 13, 2023. This structure deliberately respects the weekend, acknowledging that this meeting is a form of academic labor that will not require participants to donate their free time in order to participate. Because the workshop will take place for only five hours per day, it will allow for flexibility surrounding daily tasks such as familial and institutional obligations; our budget is likewise designed to maximize freedom of opportunity through accommodating the personal and professional needs of participants.

The first three days of the workshop will be divided by theme. The first day will focus on recruitment and pedagogy, the second will center on data collection, and the third will examine data dissemination. Each of these first three days will entail five hours of presentations, in which participants will introduce their ongoing research on these topics, mixed with panel discussion and open conversation, allowing for all workshop members to remain engaged. The last day will act as a forum for synthesis and future planning, involving structured panel discussion, group discussion, and breakout sessions for each theme that will allow participants to develop best practices guidelines for aspects of knowledge production in anthropology. Through maximizing accessibility through the use of a virtual format and flexible, needs-focused budget, we hope that our workshop can serve as a model for equitable virtual meetings in the future, within and outside of anthropology.

The workshop will result in two outcomes. First, we will submit a series of single and co-authored papers as a Vital Topics Forum in *American Anthropologist*. The combination of a concise format and a four-field journal will allow us to disseminate workshop results to a broad community of anthropologists. Second, we will develop a multimodal website that will be used as a repository for (1) recordings of the workshop talks; (2) the best practices guidelines developed during the fourth day of the workshop, and (3) any other resources, such as syllabi, annotated bibliographies, or reading lists, that collaboratively emerge from the fourth day of the workshop. All website materials will be backed up on the open-access data sharing platform Zenodo (<https://zenodo.org/>) so that they will be given digital object identifiers and remain permanently accessible.