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Essay

Behind the Velvet Rope: Exclusivity and Accessibility in Biological Anthropology

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Abstract: Despite a growing focus on diversity initiatives in the field of anthropology, accessibility to advancement is growing further out of reach for many students and early career professionals. There has been a noticeable uptick in the cost of organization membership fees, the culmination of conference costs, and the cost of certifications. This stands in contrast to an increase in the number of lower-paid adjunct positions taking the place of associate and assistant professorships and the lack of permanent applied positions. For graduating and early career anthropologists, the prospect of thriving in a field that is becoming increasingly costly seems daunting. This paper will examine growing economic exclusivity within biological anthropology and suggest possible solutions to make the field more widely accessible.

Keywords: anthropology; accessibility; socioeconomic equality; diversity; equity; forensic anthropology; postgraduate education; early career professional

1. Introduction

The old joke about the "broke college student" has become ingrained in academic culture, but it often masks a disturbing reality about the exclusivity of higher education. Being financially constrained and vulnerable in college has almost become an initiation rite into the professional world—one that can have detrimental effects on diversity in both postgraduate enrollment and, ultimately, in the workforce. Recently, there has been an increase in the dialogue surrounding diversity education and awareness in anthropology [1–5]. The field has begun to turn our attention to the formation of diversity initiatives, working groups, and committees in several of the major anthropological professional organizations [6–9]. Much of this discussion has revolved around inclusion, how to achieve an increase in the participation of traditionally underrepresented groups, and changing the lens through which we view our work as it relates to diversity issues [10–14]. Importantly, there has been a shift in focus to acknowledge our checkered past, beginning with rewriting history to make visible the previously invisible anthropology revolutionaries [15–17].

Increasing inclusion in anthropology, and more specifically biological anthropology, requires knowledge of our history and an understanding of how each facet of diversity is connected. The concept of intersectionality emphasizes that issues relating to diversity in ethnicity, color, gender identity, sexual orientation, and so many others are inescapably linked [18]. To successfully create and foster an inclusive field, conversations regarding all aspects of diversity need to continue and expand. One facet of diversity and inclusion that is often overlooked within the current conversation is socioeconomic status and the affordability of garnering a place in this field. The existing discussions around socioeconomic status often center on opportunities and success in undergraduate and postgraduate education [2] but provide less focus on the professional workplace. The intersectionality of socioeconomic status, opportunity, sex, gender, and race is already a significant point in many diversity initiatives regarding accessibility [19–23], but related conversations can only benefit from an increase in scope to include the examination of failures in the current system.

The institution of higher education has a reputation for being a place of privilege, which, when combined with a focus on diversity initiatives that decouple increasing accessibility from equity, results in making success within anthropology exclusive.

The purpose of this paper is to supplement the current conversation surrounding diversity in forensic anthropology, specifically by focusing on an area in diversity education that would benefit from a more in-depth examination and discussion. This paper seeks to provide additional points of consideration regarding the barriers to gaining a foothold and being successful in anthropology. Finally, this paper offers suggestions for where anthropology can begin to make a more inclusive and accessible field. While this discussion is by no means meant to be an exhaustive examination, and it is more narrowly focused on the biological and forensic subfield, the intent is to provide a starting point and encourage others to add to the conversation based on their own lived experiences.

2. The Cost of Biological Anthropology

In order to critically discuss where biological and forensic anthropology is in terms of socioeconomic accessibility, this paper focuses on examining the current state of the field, including where the potential for exclusion exists most, and how these specific areas may unintentionally create an exclusive environment. Additionally, the discussion is supplemented by an examination of how changes outside of the field may have impacted diversity within our field, and how our definition of a "successful" individual may feed into this exclusion.

Five broad areas relating to gaining and keeping a foothold in anthropology are presented in this article. The intention is to increase awareness and prompt a more in-depth discussion of how these areas create or sustain an exclusionary environment. These areas are: the cost of education; the cost of networking; early career barriers; middle career barriers; and how we, as a field, define success. It is important to emphasize up front that all five of these areas are inextricably linked, and things affecting one may (and likely do) affect others. Therefore, failure to accommodate a change in one area will have a negative downstream effect on our ability to create a more diverse field. Without acknowledging our own shortcomings as they relate to inclusion, we run the risk of becoming out of touch with the changing world, and as a field where the foundation of what we do is people, that possibility is detrimental to our collective success.

2.1. The Cost of Education

The high cost of both undergraduate and graduate education is a conversation that is not unique to anthropology. Many of the financial barriers experienced by anthropology students are similar to those in other social sciences and liberal arts majors. Even in primary and secondary education, there is an increased emphasis on STEM fields and a decrease in the accommodation for social sciences and the arts [24]. Due to that, majors such as biological anthropology (which fits within the STEM umbrella as it includes aspects of both biological and physical sciences but is more often categorized as a social science or within the liberal arts) receive less funding than other majors, while still being expected to keep high enrollment [25–29]. To that end, the funding available for graduate students can be scarce or unevenly distributed. Prospective students are faced with the decision to enroll with no funding or risk not being able to progress in the field. Lack of funding combined with ever-increasing tuition at the undergraduate and graduate levels is generally the first barrier many face when it comes to entering any field, and, if accepted, it also affects progression in graduate school. Funding inadequacies create competition within graduate cohorts, which can lead to a toxic environment for students.

In an article published by the Education Data Initiative [30], it is reported that undergraduate tuition at public 4-year universities is 37 times higher today than it was in 1963. Even in just a ten-year period, between 2010 and 2020, in-state tuition increased 31.4%. The average annual tuition at public universities in the 2020 to 2021 school year was USD 9375. This estimation does not factor in the price of room and board. This trend is mirrored

in graduate programs. Between 1989 and 2021, tuition rose 6.2%, from USD 1999 in 1989 to USD 12,394 in 2021 [31]. Out-of-state tuition has also increased; in 2023, the average out-of-state tuition for undergraduate programs was USD 27,841 [32]. Furthermore, more and more universities are implementing differential tuition rates based on major or school class (freshman, sophomore, and so forth) [33]. Differential tuition rates, like funding availability, can dramatically impact the diversity of degree-seeking students.

This rising cost of education and the implementation of differential tuition has a significant impact on who is able to attend college, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. By extension, it affects who is represented in the anthropology workforce, such as professorships and primary researchers. This begins early in the education pipeline, as children of color are more likely to attend high-poverty primary schools based on district lines which disproportionately disadvantages Black and Latino communities [34]. Those students who struggle due to a lack of funding or available resources have a harder time entering postsecondary institutions and often do so at a financial disadvantage. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that in 2020, approximately 10.9 million white students were enrolled in an undergraduate institution versus 2 million Black students and 3.3 million Hispanic students [35]. Degrees conferred at each level are also disproportionate when race/ethnicity is factored in [36]. Research shows that those students of color that do attend college are disproportionately affected by student loan debt [37–40]. Black and Latino students hold a higher amount of debt and receive a lower income following graduation [37].

Enrollment at the graduate level is no different, with the number of white students more than double that of Black and Hispanic students combined [35]. In 2006, the federal government uncapped student borrowing for graduate programs with the introduction of the Graduate PLUS loans. This was hailed as a possible way to make higher education more accessible to those in lower income brackets. In 2014, over 60% of graduate students were borrowing the full amount of tuition and fees each year [40], with the amount of debt held by Black and Latino students increasing at a rate greater than their white counterparts [37]. Not only have graduate school costs been steadily increasing, but interest rates on student loans have been steadily increasing as well. The increase in loans with higher interest rates negatively affects the ability of that individual to have a stable life in the future.

It is generally understood that in order to have a career in anthropology, an advanced degree is required, with a master's degree considered entry-level educational attainment [41]. Both applied and academic anthropology jobs require degrees and experience beyond what a bachelor's degree can offer. Yet, the ability to earn an advanced degree is not equally accessible to everyone. Obtaining an advanced degree in anthropology requires years of work and thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars. The average time to receive a master's degree in anthropology is two years, with an additional five years or longer for a Ph.D. [42]. Applications for graduate school are often expensive, non-refundable, and offer no guarantee of returns. To increase the likelihood of acceptance, many students apply to multiple programs. Additionally, tests such as the Graduate Records Examinations (GRE) are typically a required part of the application process for most American universities. The requirement of such exams for applications is in itself detrimental to the equity of graduate school acceptance for females, people of color, or generally anyone of lower socioeconomic status [43]. As of November 2022, the cost of the GRE is USD 220 every time that you take the test, and GRE prep courses can cost up to USD 100 [44]; practice tests and other resources are an added cost to consider when preparing. In addition to graduate application fees and test requirements, many graduate programs prefer applicants to have some experience beyond the classroom. For example, undergraduates interested in graduate programs for archeology or bioarchaeology are encouraged to attend a field school prior to applying. However, the average cost of a four-week for-credit field school is approximately USD 4065. This figure does not include airfare, credit cost, or any other costs outside of room and board [45].

Like admittance to undergraduate institutions, applicants to graduate programs often do not begin on a level playing field. Research indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between attending private institutions and being accepted to a graduate program, particularly at higher-quality, research-based institutions. Private or higher-quality institutions provide their students with higher-quality resources and more opportunities that might look good on graduate school applications [46]. Specifically for anthropology, studies have indicated that students that graduate from one of a small number of institutions have a higher probability of employment directly out of graduate school [47]. However, these institutions generally come with much higher tuition rates and fewer scholarship opportunities. Once enrolled, it is difficult for those in graduate school to attain outside employment to help battle the costs of their education or to pay back undergraduate loans. Research shows that individuals attending graduate programs full-time (full-time is generally considered as being enrolled in more than six credit hours a semester) and those that took summer courses were statistically more likely to finish a graduate program [48]. Obtaining outside employment in order to help fund your education rather than taking out student loans, therefore, may actually be a detriment to the success of your graduate education or may extend the time that you have to be in school. It may also have the downstream effect of not being present enough to have built the relationships required for strong letters of recommendation, which, according to Passalacqua and Garvin (2018), were ranked as the number one most important part of an applicant's materials [43]. Therefore, upward movement can also be affected, and field-related networking opportunities may diminish.

2.2. The Cost of Networking

Networking is often considered an important facet of career development and finding a way to make connections within your field often helps pave the way to future success. However, because the expectation of networking falls largely on students and early career individuals, it becomes an added stressor and is an increasingly heavy financial burden at a point when many people do not have either to spare. While the costs associated with the larger parts of networking are generally obvious (i.e., registration, travel, and lodging), there are additional costs that do not receive the same consideration and are often not subject to compensation or funding. The costs of networking can be disadvantageous to the ability of some to take part. The implied expectation to network ensures that many students will find the means to attend networking opportunities, such as conferences, despite the fact that it often is not a safe or comfortable financial space. Having the means to put yourself in a potentially financially vulnerable situation for the sake of furthering your career is, in and of itself, a privileged act and is not something that all students or early career professionals are able to do.

Professional memberships and their associated annual conferences are an integral part of furthering your career in the field of anthropology. National organizations, such as the American Anthropological Association (AAA), Society for American Archaeology (SAA), American Association of Biological Anthropologists (AABA), and the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS), provide opportunities to meet and connect with collaborators, introduce yourself to potential advisors or employers, build resumes, keep apprised of current research trends, and are a pathway to job opportunities. However, membership dues and conference registration fees are not the only financial aspect of these networking opportunities. Both the cost of physically getting to a conference and the cost of attending need to be addressed separately before they can be examined together. Providing avenues to make conferences and networking more financially accessible or reducing the expectation of in-person networking that is often placed on students and early career professionals is fundamental to creating a space for anthropologists from a diverse set of backgrounds and circumstances.

Conference attendance highlights the inequality that exists within academic spaces, including cost during and after presentation hours [49]. Like increases in education costs,

membership dues and registration fees have been victims to inflation and increasing operation costs [50]. Many organizations offer reduced prices for students to join or attend, but reduced fees do not address the financial burden of physically attending conferences or networking events. When opportunities such as scholarships are available to help offset some of this additional expense, it is more often than not inadequate to cover all the additional aspects of travel. Often, undergraduate, graduate students, and early career anthropologists can only afford the least expensive travel and lodging options, which generally include unpredictable travel days/times and economizing on hotels. Many individuals share rooms with several other peers or colleagues to save on cost or stay in hotels that are farther away from the conference center. These necessary cost-cutting measures can be stressful or uncomfortable experiences. Increased stress not only has effects on an individual's health but also affects interpersonal relationships and social interaction [51]. Given that one of the largest components of conferences is networking, already starting at a social deficit is its own hurdle. If the financial (and social) burden of networking is so high that it is rarely feasible for students and early career professionals to take part comfortably, then it is not an equal and accessible opportunity and will have an effect on the continuing diversity of anthropology as a whole, in both education and career trajectory.

Aside from membership dues and registration fees, additional costs can generally be broken into four categories: travel, lodging, food and drink, and clothing. Travel and lodging are obvious expenditures, but meals and clothing are rarely considered when discussing the cost of conferences, particularly in how that may affect someone's ability to attend. Despite the availability of formal networking spaces at conference venues, organic connections and networking opportunities regularly occur away from the actual podium and poster presentations. In fact, some scholars argue that the networking opportunity conferences provide is actually more important than the conference itself [49], which puts added pressure on individuals who are trying to network to spend more than they might be able to afford in order to take advantage of those networking times.

The increase in cost associated with travel has risen exponentially, putting attending conferences and events out of reach for many students and early career professionals. The U.S. Travel Association (USTA) tracks how costs associated with travel away from the home change month-to-month (known as the "Travel Price Index" or TPI) [52]. Based on the most recently published TPI (January 2023), in just the last year (January 2022 versus January 2023), airfare has increased by 25.6%, lodging by 8.5%, and food and beverages by 6.9%. A significant component of this increase in travel costs is likely associated with companies trying to recoup lost revenue from the decrease in travel during 2020 due to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As travel began to pick back up in 2021, airfare and hotel costs increased sharply [53]. This, combined with high staffing shortages, give companies the excuse to raise prices, and a continued travel demand has not deterred this. In 2022, Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt hotels reported that room reservations were steady and, in some cases, increasing; as a result, the higher demand encourages higher prices [54]. Add to this that most professional organizations hold conferences in big metropolitan areas at expensive hotels, these prices are even higher for professional travel than they are for personal travel.

Beyond travel and lodging, the financial strain that clothing may cause also factors in how accessible or affordable networking events and conferences are. Attire ranging from business casual to business formal is oftentimes expected for attendees. A greater emphasis on "looking professional" is placed on students and other networkers, as they are not only representing themselves but their advisor, their department, and their university or institution. Ironically enough, the more established a person becomes, the less pressure there is to adhere to a formal dress code, and the more leeway they are given, despite the fact that they are more likely to be able to afford these things. Additional conversations and expectations surrounding "professional dress" or "business" attire in networking spaces are often heavily gendered and generational. Clothing expectations from the top

down (later and middle-career individuals versus early career and students) are different from the expectations peers have of each other. According to Twenge and Campbell (2008), how we dress, whether consciously or unconsciously, signals our place in the social order [55], and because what is considered "casual clothing" is changing by generation (casual clothing is becoming more casual), there is greater pressure on business attire in relation to professional activities [55]. Further, in regard to public perception and workplace interaction, business attire elicits more trust and a sense of "ethicality" than casual clothing. Often snap judgments resulting from visual perceptions of clothing affect not only perceived competence but can also have an effect on assumptions formed regarding personality, mood, culture, and social status [56]. Additionally, there is an increased emphasis on workplace clothing in today's social landscape with a rise in digital interaction and virtual communication, and visual perceptions are becoming increasingly important and critical [56].

The price of clothing has also increased, and, notably, this increase has not been proportional for men's and women's clothing. From June 2020 to June 2021, men's clothing rose an average of 1.5%, while women's clothing increased by 5.3% [57]. These costs are only continuing to rise despite a temporary respite due to the COVID-19 pandemic [57,58], and increased shipping costs, ongoing supply-chain issues, and staff shortages are only adding to the financial burden on consumers.

All of this is to say two things: despite changing attitudes among younger generations, business attire is still the expected norm in many professional spaces, and expectations are not the same across the board. When examining the cost of clothing, specifically clothing that falls into the category of "business/professional" attire, experts recommend not spending more than 5–10% of your take-home salary on clothing [59,60], despite the fact that the cost of "professional" clothing can range from USD 250 to USD 1000 [59]. Expecting students and early career professionals to spend up to 10% of their take-home salary on clothing, especially when they might already be struggling with making ends meet, is an ask that is beyond what is reasonable for a group of individuals who sometimes have to decide between food, rent, and gas in their everyday lives [61–63], especially since an individual needs more than one outfit for a 3 or 4-day conference. The difference in men's and women's clothing also plays into aspects of accessibility. Per piece, men's clothing tends to be more expensive because research shows that while men are likely to spend more on clothing per shopping trip, they shop less frequently than women, whereas women shop more often and are more likely to shop popular trends, thus, spending more money overall [64,65]. It is a trend that retailers and clothing manufacturers are aware of and exploit. To that end, women's clothing is more often made out of cheaper material that does not last in order to encourage shopping the current trends. In fact, according to the New York Times, most fast fashion clothing is not designed to last more than 10 washes [66]. Ultimately, this means that there is pressure on students and young professionals to buy business attire yearly for conferences and other networking ventures, but the required clothing constitutes a significant expense, which may affect diversity in the workplace because it restricts who can "fill expectations" in terms of the ability to "dress professionally".

The last facet of networking that affects equal accessibility is how much it costs to eat away from home. Meals eaten at conferences are an extra financial hardship as the money spent is an addition to what is normally budgeted at home rather than in place of it. Hotels may or may not offer breakfast, have refrigerators and microwaves, or be located near cheap restaurants. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the cost of food has risen an average of 10.1% between 2022 and 2023, with food consumed at home increasing by 11.3% and food consumed outside of the home by 8.2% [67]. Food costs are also highly dependent on location and are generally higher for metropolitan cities (where most conferences are held).

Many universities and organizations do not fund conference travel unless the individual is presenting. If an individual wants to attend a conference for networking purposes or to keep apprised of research, they are often ineligible for financial support.

When funding opportunities are available (e.g., university travel scholarships and grants, organization-specific travel awards, NIH or DOJ grants, etc.), there are usually stipulations for what money can be spent on (i.e., travel and lodging only). The National Institute of Health, for example, specifies that "Direct charges for meals/food and beverages are unallowable charges to an NIH grant where the primary purpose is to support a scientific meeting/conference" [68]. Many scholarships and grants require an explicit budget as part of the application and for disbursement of funds. Some professional organizations do have smaller travel grants available for conference attendance, and some allow for all types of expenses to be covered; however, that is not the standard. One example is the Meeting Access Grant from the Society for American Archaeology, which supports conference attendance, and in which the funds can be applied to travel, lodging, meals, incidentals, registration fees, and even childcare [69].

In sum, networking is acknowledged as an invaluable and irreplaceable part of education and career development. In anthropology, many connections that may help career trajectories are attached to conferences and other similar networking events. However, for many, this represents a tremendous barrier due to the significant cost associated with attending them. Conferences and similar events are essentially blocked behind a paywall. When you factor in that many students and young professionals lack expendable income and, in many cases, live off of student loans and stipends, the cost of networking is high. As with the cost of education, this also affects groups disproportionately. Individuals who attend or work for smaller universities have a harder time securing funding for education expenses or travel than individuals who work outside of academia. The cost of food and clothing is often not covered when funding can be secured and can represent a considerable expense. Individuals who work jobs outside of the university may have a hard time sacrificing their income to take time off, and individuals who are responsible for childcare or caring for family members might not be able to afford the cost or time to travel. Everything is connected, and the same issues that plague the affordability of education have downstream effects on who is able to access and take advantage of networking opportunities. As discussed, barriers to affordable education at every level still exist, particularly for individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups and those groups that do not fit the "traditional college student" demographic; it is no different when you consider access to the opportunity for networking. Whether we want to admit it or not, being able to network is tied to privilege.

2.3. Early Career Barriers

A large part of early career professionals' success in the field is determined by their network; the connections, mentors, or peers that they ingrained themselves with during school and when attending conferences or taking part in research opportunities often directly provide them with collaboration and job opportunities. While the trajectory for applied practitioners and career academics may vary, these connections can be invaluable to overall career development regardless of the specific job environment that an individual is pursuing. Adjunct faculty, for example, are often not provided research budgets, and university resources are prioritized for tenured faculty. This makes it almost imperative for adjunct faculty, graduate students, and other non-tenured academics to network continuously and pay out of pocket to conduct research and collaborate with others to stay engaged within the community. Often, adjunct faculty and graduate students are forced to teach at multiple institutions to make ends meet and to be able to pay for research opportunities [70].

Publishing is also an integral part of early career advancement; in fact, a certain number of publications are often required every year to obtain tenured track positions at many universities or to be considered for applied positions. Publications and research are also looked upon very favorably for graduate school admission and job applications, as it often demonstrates an individual's ability to conduct research, and in many cases, their ability to obtain funding. However, beyond the ability to secure research opportunities, the

process of publication itself is not free, particularly for individuals that are not attached to a university or applied institution. Most journal articles are hidden behind expensive paywalls, and often, professionals that are not part of an academic institution rely on open-access journals or alternative sources to accumulate the background necessary for research or be forced to pay an exorbitant fee for access [71]. The availability of open-access publishing has not reached a point where the number of publications rivals those published in other journals. Many researchers also decide not to publish concurrently in open-access platforms compared to in more traditional journals as it often costs researchers a lot of money to add their paper to an open-access space. Taking a look at two major journal publishers, Wiley and Elsevier, publishing in open access, either in conjunction with the print issue or fully in open access space, can cost as low as USD 700 or as high as USD 5000 [72,73]. Research itself takes a tremendous amount of time to conduct and write, and those labor hours are often unpaid or done on personal time; therefore, the willingness to pay to publish is likely diminished, which then restricts research accessibility for others. The ability of authors to absorb the prohibited cost of some open-access journals can also be influenced by extrinsic factors. For example, grants for publishing in open access vary based on discipline (biological and physical sciences often get more or larger grants than social science and humanities), type of institution (e.g., research universities, community colleges, private sector), and impact factor of the journal; likewise, researchers from countries with a lower GDP often are left paying publishing fees themselves versus researchers from countries with higher GDPs who have more access to grant support [74].

It is typically expected to have at least one publication for graduate applications, and graduate students are encouraged, if not expected, to publish research as they advance in their degree program. Those entering the workforce are expected to have a robust publication history to compete in the job market and publish frequently enough to maintain good standing once employed. Publications, for example, those expected as part of an individual's tenure application in academic settings, are required to be in large-name, peer-reviewed, high-impact journals in order to count. In more general terms, the more high-impact the journal is, the more prestige that publication, and therefore the university or applied institution, receives. This makes publishing in these journals a highly competitive process among individuals at all stages in their careers. The result of this is that many early career individuals publish their work in lesser-known journals, which often makes less of an impact on potential employers, regardless of how innovative or impactful that research might be. Presenting at conferences becomes an easier avenue for those new or incoming in the field, as conferences provide a large platform for research dissemination to peers. However, as previously discussed, conference attendance is not always an option nor does it hold the same perceived value as publications as you build your professional resume.

Early career trajectory comes with its own set of barriers and challenges to overcome, particularly for individuals belonging to underrepresented groups or who may have struggled financially in school. As of 2018, the number of females receiving doctorate degrees in anthropology has reached the level of 2 to 1 of their male counterparts [47]. Research shows that within a university setting, three-quarters of full-time employees are white, with white males occupying 51% of the full professor positions (despite the increase in female graduates); a mere 4% of full-time professors are Black [75]. It is clear that tenure positions lack representation. However, marginalized academics are overrepresented in contingent work, such as adjunct faculty. Adjunct positions are short-term contract positions that do not offer the same stability or opportunities as a tenure track position and are paid approximately one-third of the salary. According to Speakman et al. (2018), between 2004 and 2014, even though they made up only one third of the qualified workforce, males were disproportionately hired into better paying and more stable positions in academia [47]. Women make up over half of the academic contingent workforce. Academics of color further make up a large part of the adjunct positions, and these numbers continue to increase in recent years. As of 2017, approximately 60% of courses at public universities are taught by adjunct or contingent professors [71], a trend

that is reflective of the shift in university priorities and intentions. Undergraduate students were transformed from pupils to be taught to customers to be appeased, and it became more financially feasible for universities to pay for contract labor rather than invest in tenure-track positions. In conjunction with that, in 1993, an exemption was introduced to federal labor laws that allowed tenured professors to bypass the required retirement age of 70. As a result, professors over the age of 65 increased dramatically and continues to remain high, which has resulted in an inability to open up new faculty positions [47]. Consequently, it became more advantageous for universities to switch to contract labor than to maintain lifelong employees. By 2009, the number of tenure-track positions plummeted to 27% [71], and the growing number of positions as contingent academics are given to those marginalized groups, a trend that is mirrored within anthropology academics. A 2008 and 2014 survey by the AABA (then the American Association of Physical Anthropologists) shows that the majority of tenure-track faculty positions were occupied by white individuals [12]. In 2008, white individuals made up 89.1% of university faculty, and in 2014, they accounted for 88.0% [12]. Further, in 2017, only approximately 11% of biological anthropologists identified as non-white [76]. White academics significantly overtook academics of color in all tenure-line positions (assistant, associate, and full).

Early professionals not only deal with navigating the challenging landscape of finding steady employment, but they also must begin the process of paying back student loans that were required to attend graduate school. The ratio of student debt to earning potential is not favorable to early career anthropologists. Overall, women as well as BIPOC academics have the highest debt with the lowest earning potential ratios [70]. This, combined with a disproportionate appointment to lower-paid adjunct positions and higher experience qualifications required for applied jobs, ensures the reproduction of class inequalities and the pervasion of systemic sexism and racism within the field. For those that do not intend to remain in academia following graduation, the salary for applied entry-level positions is often consistent with lecturer or adjunct positions in fields other than anthropology (which are often paid below the national average for academic positions) or work in Cultural Resource Management [77–79]. Thus, it is unreasonable to expect those in the early stages of their anthropological career to be held to the same financial standards or expectations as established members when they are not compensated as such.

2.4. Middle Career Barriers

Those who have made it into a position within anthropology then have to maintain their status through professional memberships and certifications, like that offered by the American Board of Forensic Anthropology or the Register of Professional Archaeologists. In forensic anthropology, the American Board of Forensic Anthropology is the only certifying agency available for U.S.-based practitioners, and there is an increased pressure to gain board certification to confidently complete anthropological casework. This is becoming an expected or required qualification for practicing forensic anthropologists, regardless of whether they are primarily employed by a university or work within an applied institution. While individuals in applied forensics sometimes have the financial support of their employer when pursuing certification, academics are often left bearing the brunt of the costs associated with attainment due to a lack of acknowledgment or funding from the university system.

To qualify for the board certification exam, an individual must have access to skeletal collections or forensic casework to have the required case reports and experience for the application. Applicants are also encouraged to use cases from several different institutions when compiling their applications to show a wide range of work. However, traveling to different institutions comes with its own set of financial stressors, including the ability to take time off to travel, being able to fund transportation, lodging, and meals away from home, and being willing to potentially sacrifice income, depending on your employer's policies. The rest of the packet includes multiple letters of recommendation and a list of all supplemental training you may have participated in. Notably, the letters of recommenda-

tion must come from individuals from at least two different institutions, and at least one of whom is board certified. For people who found networking during school or the early parts of their career inaccessible, having individuals who can speak to their skills may be difficult. Additionally, most supplemental training, such as that provided by short courses, workshops, or continuing education classes, typically has an associated registration fee and often requires travel. Similar to other professions where board certification is expected or required, a non-refundable application fee is required in addition to a fee to sit for the exam. The exam has two components; the written portion can now be taken in your home or office using a proctoring service or you can go to a testing center and pay for a spot for the day, while the practical portion requires the applicant to travel to the exam location. Should you not pass both portions, you must pay to sit for one or both portions again [80]. Ultimately, board certification for a forensic anthropologist can become expensive, and depending on which point in your career you decide to take the exam, it may be hard to fund or recoup the amount spent if it does not lead to immediate financial benefits.

Beyond the costs associated with the certification itself, the tools and programs often considered standard within the field of forensic anthropology are expensive. For example, FORDISC is the expected program for those who perform ancestry estimation; however, the current version of the program costs USD 395 for a single license [81]. Calipers and osteometric boards, which are required for multiple aspects of biological profile estimation and are fundamental to running programs such as FORDISC, can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars, a cost that is often not reimbursed by institutions. This does not take into account any more specialized equipment, such as mandibulometers, digitizers, dental calipers, or other necessary or useful software or analytical programs; and for setting up a forensic anthropology lab or program or curating a list of personal necessities, this can be an overwhelming expense.

Forensic anthropologists who conduct or participate in field recoveries are also encouraged to apply to become part of the Registry of Professional Archeologists. The application for certification does not require a test; however, certification ensures the applicant has an advanced degree and experience in archeological fieldwork. Continuing education is required for all certified individuals, along with yearly dues. However, the price to be certified is discounted if you are part of a professional organization, such as the Society for American Archaeology, and is completely waived if you register within six months of obtaining your degree [82].

Middle-career anthropologists, similar to students and early-career professionals, are also expected to continue to be members of professional organizations. In some cases, attending conferences or being a member of these organizations holds the same benefit as it does in the earlier stages of career development, such as keeping up with new developments and technology within the field, understanding new issues and areas of emphasis related to identification and casework, collaborating, and, usually to a less extent, networking. It also provides an avenue to meet with prospective students or job applicants. While, to some extent, the same issues that plague the early career stage are absent from middle-career trajectories, middle-career professionals have their own set of barriers, often focused on promotion, tenure, and research, that can be financially stressful in their own right, particularly as inflation, cost of living, and current life circumstance may affect expendable income.

2.5. What Is Success?

There is no single definition that can be applied when examining the concept of success as it applies to education or professional achievement; even within the current educational literature, the definition of success is not consistent [83]. Ultimately, success is a social construct [83] and is established and defined by individuals within a given institution; thus, how we define success in biological or forensic anthropology can have a surprising and tremendous impact on creating a more inclusive and accessible environment. Success or a "successful" anthropologist likely looks different based on where an individual

is within their education or career, what a person hopes to gain from their education, and overall career trajectory; therefore, creating a single definition is not truly possible. However, discussing what success means as it relates to school and career is important in understanding the barriers that exist to creating an inclusive and safe discipline for anthropology students and practitioners. As discussed in the above sections, each part of career development from undergraduate to middle or even late career comes with its own set of challenges and hurdles. Success at each of these points will look different even for the same individual; it is a fluid, ever-changing metric, and that affects who has achieved it in the eyes of their peers and colleagues.

In institutions of higher education, the term "success" is often applied to multiple outcomes, despite the fact that the metrics to determine what success looks like are different and not applicable across the board [84]. Success as an undergraduate student might be defined as passing classes, graduating, getting into graduate school, or feeling like you have built up skills and abilities that might help you in your career. Some suggest that "success" in education is almost contractual, where students are judged based on their ability to satisfactorily complete established tasks (e.g., classes), which ultimately leads to a diploma (the "ultimate measure" of academic success) [85]. For students who come from school systems in cities or districts where funding issues make it harder to get ahead, or whose families might not be able to afford the expense of supporting children in college without taking out loans, success might look like receiving scholarships, getting good grades, balancing school and work to lessen the loans you have to take out, or showing that circumstance and background influence who you are but not what you can do. It might look like being the first generation of your family to attend or graduate from college, to pursue graduate school, or it can look like just surviving day to day [85]. All of those are valid definitions of success—receiving a 4.0 in a class versus a 2.5 does not necessarily mean that one individual is more successful than the other. Assuming that grades indicate success disregards non-academic expectations and circumstances such as the amount of free time someone had to devote to studying—maybe they work one or more jobs, maybe they do not have the same access to equipment and are required to use library computers and are thus restricted by the hours of operation, or maybe they are a single parent and do not have the same amount of free time to study. As a society, we place so much emphasis on grades that, in the long term, mean very little and because of that, we risk excluding people who may be a tremendous asset to the trajectory of our field as a whole. The ambiguity in how success is defined in an educational setting ultimately has a negative effect on the mental health and self-image of many students, particularly those who struggle due to outside circumstances [85]. When asked if students would define themselves as successful, O'Shea and Delahunty (2018) found that while the majority of survey respondents answered "yes," a significant number of individuals said they either were not sure or would not define themselves as successful, or just skipped the question completely [85].

In an academic environment, outsiders might perceive a student's success based on grade point average, extracurricular activities like clubs or volunteering, or test scores, but those are things that are tied to an individual's privilege and access. Extracurricular activities are important, but students need to have the time, means, and energy to participate in them. Outside circumstances might restrict people from being able to take part, and the assumption that these are pillars that define what success looks like creates artificial barriers to moving forward in their career trajectory. Joining field schools or going on a study abroad are the definition of what privilege looks like in a university environment, whether or not they are beneficial. Field schools and study abroad provide an amazing opportunity, but not only are individuals not being paid for their work, they likely have to take time off from their actual job to participate. If an individual has the responsibility to care for a family or needs a consistent stream of income to survive, it makes going to field schools and or on a study abroad even more difficult and, because doing so is not equally accessible, giving so much weight to them on a resume or application is a poor measure of success.

Regarding early and middle-career professionals, success may also be defined differently. Here, the definition may depend on your degree level and whether you want to go into academia or applied forensics, or may be defined as simply the ability to secure a permanent or full-time job [83]. For an applied anthropologist, success might be working in a medical examiner's office, being part of human rights investigations or recoveries, becoming board-certified, pioneering new methods that impact strengthening forensic casework, or creating cross-discipline forensic institutions. Whereas, for a person who wants to go into academia, success might look like getting a postdoctoral, lecturer, or teaching position; designing a new course; obtaining tenure; running a field school; or helping students graduate and enter the job market. In a study looking at how career academics objectively define their success, "status", tenure, and promotion were the top metrics offered [83]; however, "status" itself is subjectively defined by the individual and the field. Examples of achieving "status" included things such as invitations to speak at conferences, invitations to collaborate, and taking on leadership roles [83].

While all of these possible characteristics of success are expected components of furthering a career, they are not equally important or accessible to all individuals. Creating a more accessible and inclusive system can help feed into success, however it is ultimately defined, and may help foster a more diverse field of anthropology.

3. Discussion

Diversity education and awareness have come a long way in recent years. As new generations enter our field and into the professional world, new conversations and discussions about how to make anthropology as inclusive as possible are being had. The fundamental goal of the field of anthropology is gaining a greater understanding of what makes us human, and how who we are is expressed to the world. If we do not make understanding the barriers to entry into our field a fundamental concern, we run the risk of excluding valuable perspectives, experiences, knowledge, and understanding of the world around us. Diversity should not just be about making individual aspects of anthropology more inclusive. It should include a greater understanding of the barriers and hurdles that foster an exclusive environment, how they interact, and how they can be overcome to become successful at each stage of education and professional development.

The increasing inflation has had a detrimental effect on creating an accessible avenue for many individuals to pursue anthropology as a career. It is not the intent of this paper to assume this does not have an impact on the affordability of higher education and subsequent employment. However, financial circumstances should not be the strongest determining factor in someone's ability to move forward in this field, and we can find ways to lessen the financial burden to help offset some of this financial stress. Below are some ideas of how we can adjust our current practices to create a more financially accessible field, and that may help foster increased diversity:

1. Virtual networking. With an increase in virtual lectures, training, and meetings, creating more opportunities for virtual networking is one possible way to help with making connections while lessening the financial burden of attending, but not presenting, at conferences. While there is obvious value to also being apprised of the research and trends that are currently going on in the field (see point 2), providing a space and opportunity to support individuals who might otherwise not be able to afford the cost or time to attend several conferences a year may help lessen the financial barriers. Creating an event where people at varying levels of education and career can connect virtually would have tremendous benefits and help reduce the financial burden of in-person networking while not negatively affecting one's ability to network and collaborate;

2. Split virtual/in-person conferences. During the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic, several professional organizations switched to virtual conferences or hybrid virtual/in-person meetings. Many of these ended once travel and occupancy restrictions ended and vaccine requirements were lifted, but the benefits they provided cannot be over-

looked. Virtual conferences not only allow attendance by those individuals who might not be able to afford travel (especially with attending but not presenting, which is rarely funded), but it is an avenue for providing flexibility for participation. Conferences could provide recorded talks that stay up for a given amount of time for people to watch or revisit if necessary. If more organizations continued with hybrid conferences, individuals who have responsibilities that may prevent them from taking advantage of this learning and networking opportunity in-person (such as childcare, family obligations, or work) could watch the presentations when they had the opportunity and could therefore keep up with the current research in the field. The AABA, for example, has continued to provide both in-person and virtual options for their 2023 conference [86];

3. Regional conferences. The formation of smaller organizations and local conferences, such as the Texas Association of Biological Anthropology; Mountain, Desert, and Coastal Forensic Anthropology Conference; Midwest Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology Conference; and Forest, Lakes, and Grasslands Forensic Anthropologists Conference, provide opportunities for networking and presenting closer to home, and, typically, at a much lower cost. However, because, by nature, these conferences are smaller, they are often thought not to provide as much of an opportunity to connect with anthropologists outside of a specific geographic region as larger conferences are and are, as a result, often overlooked. Encouraging students to see the value (not only financially) of attending these smaller meetings can help build connections not only within their home region but can act as links in a chain to peers and colleagues outside of that area by widening their available network while reducing the financial expectations of larger conferences;

4. Payment plans. Spurred on by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in merchants and companies who offer payment plans for large purchases. Companies such as PayPal [87], Affirm [88], and Klarna [89] provide no-interest plans that can be split into four equal payments and paid in two-week intervals, allowing an individual to break a large expense into more manageable amounts. Particularly, for registration fees or membership dues, allowing payments by methods other than credit or debit would help relieve the financial shock that these expenses cause, particularly for individuals with less expendable income. Given that many students and early career professionals are expected to be a part of, and active in, many different professional organizations, providing payment options would go a long way to support or facilitate that. Considering that most professional organizations have dues invoices sent at the same time of year, and depending on how many organizations you are part of, this can add up quickly. Similarly, given that conference registration fees can vary wildly from USD 80 for student participants to USD 600 for non-member attendees, the financial burden of some conferences is unreasonable. Add on the fact that registration fees do not include workshops, luncheons, or career fairs, the cost to attend and reap the full benefits of these experiences is out of reach for some individuals. Providing the ability for participants to lessen the tremendous financial shock they experience at one time provides an avenue to make these meetings more accessible all around.

5. Journal fees and data sharing. For individuals attached to universities or applied institutions that have subscriptions to journals, access to current research in the field (or even past research) is largely obtainable. Not every university or organization will have access to every journal, but just having the ability to read and download articles from any journal is integral to advancement in this field. Many researchers do their best to provide their own papers for free on websites such as Academia.edu and ResearchGate, but that is not always an option, particularly for older research. Many journals provide limited options for access if you are not a member of the organization they are attached to or have a subscription through your institution. For example, the Journal of Forensic Science offers three options for accessing articles that are behind a paywall [90]: 48 h limited access, which allows an individual

unlimited views of a single article for 48 h, but articles cannot be downloaded or printed; online access only, which allows for unlimited viewing of the article at any point, but articles cannot be downloaded or printed; and PDF download and online access, which allows for unlimited online viewing of an article and the ability to print and download. The cost for article access ranges from USD 12 to USD 49 for a single article. An annual online subscription is USD 392/year and only includes the volumes published during the subscription year, not previous issues. If a researcher is trying to find older research on a relevant topic or is studying for a certification exam, the financial requirement to do so is a significant barrier to many, if not most, early career professionals. Providing cheaper subscription options; widening the benefits of journal subscriptions to include things like downloads or back issues; increasing the scope of websites such as JSTOR [91], which provide a certain number of free article downloads a year; and finding ways to reduce the cost of open-access publishing would help balance the cost/benefit scale and make research more accessible to a wider audience.

The other aspect associated with fees to publish and fees to read is general access to data. Researchers tend to be guarded about sharing raw data, and lacking access to the published data creates obstacles to producing novel research or testing and validating methods. Creating free-access databases may help reduce the cost burden associated with data collection. It may also help encourage researchers to share data or collaborate more often and with those farther away;

6   Changing how we, as a field, define "success." A reliance on GPA or GRE test scores to define educational success has a myriad of issues related to all areas of diversity, inclusion, and accessibility that are beyond the scope of this paper. However, understanding that lower GPAs or poor test scores do not equate to failure and are not a great metric for determining stipend and funding disbursement can help lay the groundwork for increasing inclusion and making graduate school, in particular, more accessible. This is not a call to completely disregard GPA or GRE test scores when making decisions on school admittance, but a recommendation for redistributing how different factors are weighed when it comes to an evaluation rubric, which can help increase diversity within postsecondary and graduate institutions. Redefining what constitutes a successful applicant can widen the diversity of these programs taking into account background and circumstance and, ultimately, help encourage a larger, more diverse applicant pool. An increase in the diversity of who is accepted into a graduate program will have downstream effects for increasing the diversity of anthropologists as a whole, both in academia and for applied positions.

The above suggestions are by no means meant to represent an exhaustive list of potential ways to make anthropology more financially inclusive and accessible; they merely highlight the fact that small changes can be made that may result in a much larger overall impact. This is particularly true for students and early career professionals who may have fewer expendable assets to be financially stable in general, let alone when the cost of career progression is considered. The purpose of research and science is to be a conduit for knowledge, not just within a field or within the walls of education. Anthropology should be focused not only on increasing the understanding of what it means to be human within our field but to share that knowledge with anyone who wants to know it. If we restrict learning and knowledge, whether intentionally or unintentionally, we risk conforming to the ivory tower stereotype, and the knowledge that we gain as a discipline provides no benefit to the rest of the world and therefore has no impact.

4. Conclusions

While much of the focus of this paper is on inclusivity and accessibility within biological and forensic anthropology, many of the topics discussed likely apply to other subfields within anthropology as a whole. We encourage all anthropologists to have these

conversations and consider how to be increasingly inclusive. The fundamental goal of the field of anthropology is gaining a greater understanding of people—our cultures, our history, how we are different, and how we are similar. The process of how we examine the human experience varies from subfield to subfield, but the ultimate goal is always the same. If anthropology is not an inclusive field, if it is not a diverse field, we will fail as a discipline. Practitioners who have diverse backgrounds, who have different life experiences, and who may see the world in a different way are a driving force for understanding who we are and how we can grow. If we do not push for making our field accessible, if we do not give space for others or for encouraging diversity in perspective, background, and circumstance, can we really say we are succeeding? The world is always changing; each generation brings with it new ideas, new struggles, and new ways to relate to the world around them, and if we do not embrace that or find ways to encourage the inclusion of those new and unique perspectives, we will become obsolete.

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