TRICKLE-DOWN EQUITY
REPLY TO SHOTT (2022)

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As early career (Jess Beck) and mid-career (Julien Riel-Salvatore) scholars, we agree with Michael J. Shott's (2022) recent and commendable emphasis on archaeology's future. We disagree strongly, however, on what he diagnoses as the central problems of our discipline as well as on the changes urgently required to make its future a more equitable one.

To investigate whether academic archaeology is a meritocracy and to ascertain whether high-performing scholars are rewarded by commensurate professional placement, Shott (2022) uses cumulative publications and citations (a variant of *h*-index) as a proxy for merit and program level (BA/MA-granting or PhD-granting) as a proxy for placement. His core conclusion is that a more equitable approach to career advancement would control for the "cumulative advantage" provided by institutional resources. He proposes remedies that would reward scholars with high publication output and punish scholars who "underperform" by producing fewer, less highly cited publications. The logic and tenor of the piece is punitive, rather than constructive, based on the assumption that once cumulative advantage is removed, "underperformance" is no longer a process informed by larger social and professional dynamics beyond individual control.

Publications are inarguably one component of scholarly productivity, and we appreciate Shott's point that "numbers can help answer legitimate questions" (2022:27) about the structure and dynamics of the academy. However, the central premise of the piece and the primacy it gives to publications and the *h*-index as reliable indices of academic productivity perpetuate a myopic view of academic merit laden with damaging implications for underrepresented identities in the professoriate.

Focusing first on the issue of publications, abundant research in archaeology has demonstrated that women publish less than men, particularly in high-tier journals, and that these differences are more pronounced for multiply marginalized scholars (Bardolph 2014; Heath-Stout 2020). These disparities appear to be rooted in differences in submission rates rather than editorial or reviewer bias, a pattern that also emerges for major archaeological grants (Goldstein et al. 2018). Causal factors include persistently inequitable divisions of domestic labor, unequal childcare loads, and higher service burdens for women faculty (Guarino and Borden 2017). Differential reward structures of gendered research institutions devalue the "invisible work" of teaching, service, and advising, burdens that are disproportionately borne by marginalized faculty (Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group 2017). It is likewise well documented that faculty of color experience "identity taxation" that subjects them to higher service burdens and pastoral duties as they are sought out more frequently for mentorship by students, as well as the demands of educating their colleagues about race (Rideau 2021). This care work is rarely recognized in official evaluation of workload or is patronizingly framed as a personal choice rather than essential academic labor.

The demands of the "second shift" for women academics have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing many mothers to transition professional and personal priorities to teaching and childcare, to the detriment of the research outputs that are most valued for promotion and tenure (Minello et al. 2021). Indeed, initial research suggests that women faculty already face disproportionate pandemic consequences in terms of stress levels, mental health, and workloads due to the heightened expectations of gendered pastoral care in both professional and personal contexts, with the effects of these disparities potentially unfolding for decades (Docka-Filipek and Stone 2021). By focusing only on the cumulative advantage in publication output afforded by institutional resources, Shott erases the myriad oppressive dynamics that present obstacles to publishing for many scholars (Ahmed 2021; Voss 2021a, 2021b), with the insidious implication that controlling for the effects of differential institutional resources somehow levels the playing field.

Compounding these problems is the impact of identity on citation. For instance, Black archaeologists are not acknowledged as knowledge producers or incorporated into the canon

(Ike et al. 2020; Watkins 2020). Black women anthropologists are consistently under-cited (Smith and Garret-Scott 2021), and Black scholars are rarely, if ever, included on anthropological syllabi (Ralph 2019). Indigenous epistemologies and traditional knowledge are likewise typically devalued relative to Western methodological and theoretical frameworks (Atalay 2006; Laluk 2017). Finally, women archaeologists are less likely to be cited than men (Hutson 2002). By citing himself almost as many times as he cites publications with a first, last, or solo woman author, Shott's own article testifies to these dynamics (Hutson 2006). When we narrow our focus to the archaeological literature, Shott cites himself two and half times as often as he cites publications with a first, last, or solo woman author. Curiously, his references also avoid the significant literature on bias in knowledge production in archaeology that has accumulated over the last four decades (Clancy et al. 2014; Franklin 1997a, 1997b; Gero et al. 1983; Heath-Stout and Hannigan 2020; Moser 2007).

The article shows the risk inherent in elevating a threadbare aphorism—publish or perish—to the prime objective of academic careers when, in American academia, it is well understood to refer first and foremost to obtaining tenure. That the "post-tenure slump" is a recognized feature of many academic careers discredits the framing of "publish or perish" as the only imperative of academia, undermining Shott's central argument. Likewise, his emphasis on merit—however measured—as the prime mover of academic careers is belied by the well-established fact that PhD program alone largely predicts one's likelihood of landing an academic position (Clauset et al. 2015; Kawa et al. 2019). Thus, Shott's view that merit can be adequately assessed solely by post-PhD productivity effectively sets up a strawman argument, especially considering that most academic archaeologists now begin publishing while in graduate school to be competitive on the current job market, such as it is. It is also perplexing that he omits external research funding from his measures of productivity, despite its central role in helping secure tenure-track positions and tenure today.

This is particularly true since newly minted PhDs are expected to excel in all dimensions of their academic track record as they launch onto the job market to have even a fighting chance at landing a position. As Cramb and others demonstrate in their article charting changing profiles of archaeology faculty, "the goalposts of achievement have indeed moved over the decades" (2022:375), with increasing expectations for original fieldwork, teaching experience, external funding, publications, and regular conference presentations for current candidates relative to previous cohorts. The "buyer's market" precipitated by the collapse of

higher education has led job candidates to shoulder the burden of endlessly proliferating job requirements in tandem with vanishingly small chances of ever landing a permanent position. Considering that early career researchers sacrifice geographic stability, proximity to family, and lifetime earnings to pursue the stepping-stone contingent positions that are increasingly a requirement to be competitive on the market (see Cramb et al. 2022:377), Shott's claim that the institutional inertia of senior scholars in archaeology who have stable jobs and salaries is an "equally grave" problem to the hiring crisis for early career researchers is out of step with the current state of North American academia.

Shott's central tenet is that producing increasing numbers of publications that are highly cited is the principal and self-evident goal of science. This ignores the well-known problem of "salami-slicing papers," which pushes the number of publications ever higher without appreciably contributing to the pursuit of new research questions or results. This attitude also inhibits early-career scholars from embarking on risky, contentious, or time-consuming research out of a concern for producing publishable results above all else. Shott's stance further ignores that archaeology comprises different types of research outputs that go beyond papers reported on Google Scholar: CRM and technical field reports, community-engaged scholarship, and digital scholarly output, which are increasingly recognized as essential contributions to the field, fulfilling the disciplinary responsibility to communicate the value of archaeological research to the public, descendant communities, and other stakeholders (Klein et al. 2018). By disregarding alternative forms of research output, Shott promotes an outdated "ivory tower" model of archaeology in which research should be produced strictly by *and for* archaeologists.

This outlook trivializes the actual richness and diversity of an academic career by reducing it to publications alone. Though Shott pays lip service to teaching at a few points in his article, he fails to mention the time and resources required to be an effective educator. He likewise ignores the considerable commitment required to competently mentor and train graduate students. Accounting for this kind of responsibility in addition to his measures of productivity would likely put colleagues in PhD-granting programs in a considerably more favorable light. The same is true of service: it is odd that Shott chooses to ignore service and administrative roles in his evaluation of faculty productivity. Under his half-measures, the patsy who would step up to serve as chair of an independent archaeology department would presumably rapidly be demoted, saddled with lower pay, or tasked with increased teaching loads as soon as their *h*-index takes a hit—unless of course administrative

assignments are to be considered another form of punishment for lower or decreased productivity.

Finally, several dedicated archaeology programs do exist in North America and contradict Shott's argument that splitting from anthropology would lead to hiring sprees in academic archaeology. Indeed, the Department of Archaeology at Simon Fraser University, the Archaeology Program at Boston University, and the Department of Archaeology at Memorial University of Newfoundland comprise 19, 14, and 11 faculty (including lecturers), respectively, well below the lofty faculty counts he references in Table 1 (Shott 2022:32). Given that current academic funding priorities are almost exclusively focused on STEM and vocational training, and with recurrent examples of archaeology departments being shuttered in the UK (including those at the University of Sheffield and the University of Worcester, for example), one is hard-pressed to imagine a sudden wellspring of resources emerging to support the establishment of independent archaeology departments. The fact that the independent archaeology department at the University of Calgary was recently recombined with anthropology to form the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, and the former Department of Archaeology at Boston University was reorganized as the current Archaeology Program, only further underscores this point.

This existing evidence suggests that extricating the field of archaeology from anthropology departments is unlikely to produce the marked increases in faculty numbers that Shott envisions. His plan to convince elderly faculty to retire by berating them in the pages of a national magazine is also unlikely to lead to an increase in funding for junior or mid-career hires (Shott 2022:31). Confronting deeply embedded structural issues in higher education through an appeal to individual volition is naïve at best and willfully disingenuous at worst. The lifting of ADEA restrictions on academic faculty in 1994 occurred before the advent of steep increases in US healthcare costs and the cratering of retirement funds precipitated by the 2008 recession. As a result of these seismic shifts in healthcare, the economy, and retirement policies, the number of professors over age 65 doubled between 2000 and 2010, while the median age of professors exceeded that of any other occupational group (Kaskie 2017). Alterations to the tempo of retirement in higher education must address the complex factors behind prolonged faculty careers, which are not solely related to questions of personal choice and identity but encompass calculations concerning retirement planning, healthcare costs, and financial incentives. Systemic problems require systemic solutions, as in the statutory amendments to ADEA regulation that Earle and DelPo Kulow (2015) propose in

their thoughtful and thorough recent paper. Approaching the issue from a public health perspective rather than a legal perspective, Kaskie (2017) advocates for holistic institutional approaches that combine early retirement incentives, employer-based fitness and health programs, and comprehensive retirement counseling (Kaskie 2017). Shunting the blame for large-scale policy failures onto elderly faculty is inaccurate, and dismissive demands that these issues be mitigated through voluntary retirements are unhelpful. The "solutions" that Shott proposes to the problem of prolonged faculty careers are simplistic and unlikely to lead to meaningful change in the academy, especially when contrasted with the policies proposed by scholars in other disciplines who have conducted rigorous research on this topic.

Though Shott claims that the online ranking system he proposes would account for "cumulative advantage, the significant differences in teaching load, research support, availability of current and former students to cite one's work . . . and other factors that influence bibliometric measures" (Shott 2022:31–32), he provides no indication of how such a system would be managed or moderated. As anyone who has spent any time on the Internet in the last 10 years knows, online platforms are cesspits of vitriol, especially for marginalized faculty (Kavanagh and Brown 2020; Massanari 2018). Why Shott believes such a system would provide objective and equitable assessments of faculty merit is baffling.

Shott's proposed remedies are framed as "half-measures on the path to equity." Given his focus on mid-career scholars, however, what does equity entail, especially when the term is taken to mean almost precisely the opposite of what it actually means? While some of Shott's suggestions might lead to the placement justice that he so desires, such justice will occur only for a professoriate predominantly composed of white men (White and Draycott 2020). Shott's focus on institutional resources as the most pressing source of academic inequity misses the forest for the trees, and his remedies fail to account for or rectify the many other identity-related inequities that permeate academic archaeology, including the costs incurred because of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and disability (Heath-Stout 2019). More distressingly, the suggestion that we should routinely engage in the systematic and tedious ranking of individual scholars promotes a grim neoliberal outlook and an audit culture mentality (sensu Strathern 2000) about what an academic career should be, focused on eking out status and promotion at the expense of our peers, as opposed to promoting good citizenship and a fuller appreciation for the human past. This misanthropic view can only lead to an impoverished discipline driven by all the wrong incentives.

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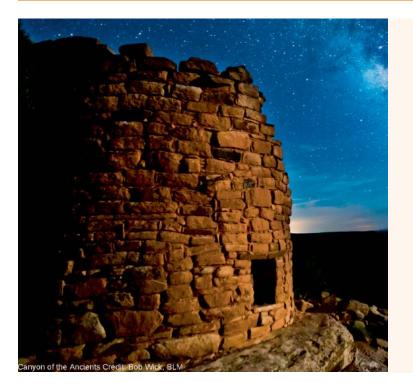***Michael J. Shott***, *Department of Anthropology, University of Akron, Ohio*

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