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Archaeology, The Academy, and Women: Finding One's Own Path

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Abstract: While women have long been key to archaeological research, the role of women and women's voices have grown substantially in the last 50 years. Once predominantly found in the laboratory rather than in the field, women archaeologists are driving the discipline forward through field work and analysis. Similar developments are taking place throughout higher education in both academics and in leadership. At the same time, work on the engendered past is also evolving. However, more needs to be done. Issues in the field, particularly injustices done toward women associated with fieldwork, are coming to the forefront, hopefully assuring a future with higher ethical standards. The personal stories of female archaeologists help provide context to the past as well as opportunities for the future of archaeology.

Keywords: women in archaeology; fieldwork; Maya and Mesoamerican archaeology; career and family; academic administration; history of archaeology

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1. Introduction

Solid efforts already exist that look at the history of women in archaeology, consider contemporary equity and climate issues relating to women, and focus on the identification of gender in the past. While various authors identify issues and trends relating to women in archaeology and academia, each of us has experienced these trends and issues differently. My goal in this article is not to reproduce or update the literature regarding women in archaeology and academia e.g., [1–6], but rather to provide some history and context to my own experiences as a woman in archaeology—both in a university setting and in the field—and to explore how those experiences have changed or remained the same with the passage of time. The intent is to show how even successful women's paths may have been made more difficult because of gender and that it is possible to persevere and overcome seemingly insurmountable barriers and ceilings.

2. Background and Education

The 1970s and 1980s were a great time to be an archaeologist working in the Americas and a heady time to be doing dissertation work. The field was focused on making archaeology more scientific and on figuring out ways to discover and understand things in the past that previously had been considered unknowable. At that time, there also was much communication across geographic areas rather than regional isolation. Both connected to the archaeological traditions of the past and relishing these intellectual conversations surrounding the "new archaeology" [7], I could not imagine that my gender could be an impediment to my work. Even through there were no female archaeologist faculty members at my undergraduate and graduate institution (the University of Pennsylvania), that did not matter to me at the time—what mattered was science and our greater knowledge about what happened in the past and how we could "know what we know." Since then, I have learned that there are many occasions when gender does make a difference. One is often conditioned by the conventions of the time, and these sometimes hide the injustices and aggressions that are perpetuated; it is only with hindsight that their full effects can be

contextualized. As one female Maya archaeological researcher commented, "I just accepted that was the way things are . . . it didn't bother me because I loved what I was doing" [8] (p. 10). While the field of Maya archaeology has changed, there is still significant work to be done to promote inclusive and equitable policies and practices not only in archaeology but also in higher education and in day-to-day life. Nevertheless, building on the retrospective provided here, I remain enthusiastic about the possibilities that the future holds.

When I was growing up, I did not plan to become most of the things into which I morphed: an archaeologist doing research at a remote fieldwork location, a faculty member, and an academic administrator. I did not even realize that any of these were actual possibilities. Looking backwards, however, there were some tell-tale clues. One of my favorite past-times as a young child was digging—both inside and outside of our home-made sandbox. Some years after receiving my Ph.D. and after landing my first real full-time job, my mother fondly told me that, if she had known that all my playing in the dirt and mud would lead to a career in archaeology, she was not sure whether she would have encouraged or discouraged me in that exercise. In the end, though, I know it would have been encouragement.

We lived on Long Island, New York, near my father's extended family. My father was a pathologist and my mother a nurse. We took family trips across the country every other summer to see my mother's family who lived and farmed in Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. While the purpose of those trips was to see family, the extra treat came afterwards. We would travel further across the country to visit museums and archaeological sites. I particularly liked our visits to Mesa Verde and Chaco Canyon in the Southwest. In retrospect, I think that my father might have been an archaeologist—or more probably a bio-archaeologist [9]—had the times been different. Those trips piqued my interest in the ancient past, and the long drives with no break—eating meals while driving in the car—prepared me for my later annual treks across the U.S. and through Mexico to get to our field sites in Belize.

As was popular at the time, I was a Girl Scout. I did not much like getting badges for sewing (I know they are far more diverse now) or for selling cookies (eating them was and is just fine). However, I loved going camping, sleeping in my sleeping bag, and cooking over an open fire with my cohort. Little did I know that that those camping and team-work experiences would transform into a career of fieldwork and bivouacking in the jungle.

In high school, my favorite subjects were social science, math, and photography—all areas that are still important to me today. Yet another sign of my future career path was apparently my desire to share what I knew with others. It started with my unsuspecting brothers, but then it deepened as I went to college, where I bravely signed up to teach photography at the Free School (which offered classes to those from the community who were interested in the topic) and then led photo safaris across greater Philadelphia.

When it was time for me to head off to university for an undergraduate degree, I picked the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) partially because of its non-conformist reputation compared with other Ivy League institutions and also because of the fact that it was a long-standing co-ed institution compared to the other Ivy League schools. I was not sure what I wanted to do after college or what I wanted to major in, but I wanted enough course choices to select from—and I knew I wanted archaeology to be one of the options (even though it was then seen as unlikely career path). Luckily for me, one of the classes I took during my first semester at Penn was Introduction to Anthropology taught by John Witthoft (an archaeologist specializing in Pennsylvania prehistory and in the science of technology; [10]). He was an amazing teacher, and by the end of his class, I was hooked.

But, back to why the 1970s and 1980s were exciting times. During freshman year, I lived in Penn's "quadrangle," as did four other anthropology majors, all of whom choose to make anthropology their career. Out of these five anthropology majors, four continued in archaeology and earned their Ph.D.'s: myself and my future husband and colleague Arlen Chase (Visiting Professor at Pomona College), Patricia Crown (Leslie Spier Distinguished Professor at the University of New Mexico), and Barbara Mills (Regents' Professor in

Anthropology at the University of Arizona), while Robert Hill (Professor Emeritus at Tulane) earned his degree in cultural anthropology. Interestingly, of the four archaeologists, only one (Arlen) was male.

In the early 1970s, there was a large cohort of archaeology students at Penn. We regularly went to the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, especially when it was nearby on the east coast. Some meetings and sessions were particularly memorable, such as one session in Washington, D.C., where Michael Schiffer (known for his work on behavioral archaeology [11] and archaeological formation processes [12]) prompted the audience to find out if anyone had a scientific law they had developed and proved—a law that could be shared. I had been exposed to the new archaeology, and more specifically behavioral archaeology, not through classes at Penn but rather through conversations with classmates and my future husband, who had been among the first undergraduates to attend the NSF-sponsored Grasshopper Field School in 1973 [13]. He was present as Schiffer finished his Ph.D. dissertation and brought a rough copy of that treatise back with him to Penn; he had also been present on a project food-supply run when the various co-authors blocked out the initial statement on behavioral archaeology, later published in *American Anthropologist* [14]. His enthusiasm for this mode of thinking was contagious and these early conversations helped both of us focus our research efforts in later years. My additional experiences excavating historic materials, shell middens, and dog burials in Delaware also made it clear that it was not only the theory that interested me but also the acts of digging and recording.

Marrying in 1975 after the completion of our undergraduate degrees, Arlen and I stayed at Penn for graduate school, buoyed by the vibrant traditions of the Tikal and Quirigua Archaeological Projects, monthly Pennsylvania Anthropological Society lectures, dinners, after-lecture gatherings, regular research colloquiums, and happy hours that included faculty and students. We would spend hours in conversation at these events or in The University Museum coffee shop discussing whether archaeology should be spelt with an "ae" (archaeology) or an "e" (archeology) and what the spelling meant in terms of expectations from new archeology and ties with past archaeological traditions [15]. We debated the ability to generate social organization from material remains [16] and whether it would ever be possible to develop emic categories for analyses of the past [17]. In addition and just as importantly, I felt a sense of belonging both to Penn archaeology/anthropology and my colleagues—something we now know to be one of the keys to success [18].

As I noted earlier, Penn was, for me, the right place at the right time. I was able to study with a series of anthropologists who helped round out my knowledge and skills. I took Maya archaeology from Bob Sharer, who served as the best man at our wedding. A course in archaeological methods from Bill Coe and Bernard Wailes contrasted New and Old World techniques. I studied ethnohistory with Anthony Wallace, which enamored me with the possibilities of comparing history and archaeology. From Bill Coe, I learned the importance of accurate recording as well as what one learned about stratigraphy and context though the process of inking drawings. My course in Maya ethnography with Ben Reina opened my eyes to the ways in which innovation can be stymied by societal norms as well as the importance of physical things—dress, pottery—in demonstrating shared identity. Ward Goodenough taught me the value of comparative ethnography and Freddy DeLaguna (through a Penn agreement with Bryn Mawr) taught me the history of anthropology and the value of being immersed in the history of ideas. I learned human skeletal analysis from Alan Mann, which served as a strong foundation for my later specialization. Geographical breadth to my archaeological background was provided on my dissertation committee by Greg Possehl, who specialized in the archaeology of India and Pakistan, and by Jacques Bordaz, who specialized in Paleolithic lithics from Europe; Possehl helped me realize that my archaeological research was not just bolstered by history but that it could be part of a key methodology for testing the validity of history; Bordaz taught me the importance of asking one key question rather than multiple ones. Finally, from advanced courses with

John Witthoft, I learned about the relationships among things (long before entanglement theory [19]) and the intricate relationship between technology and culture change.

The only full-time female faculty in the Penn anthropology department at the time that I was there were cultural anthropologists working outside the Americas (Peggy Sanday and Sandra Barnes). Many have pointed to the value of having a role model that looks like you and/or has shared life experiences [20–23]; however, having a female role model was not an option. I had, however, witnessed successful women in the field outside of Penn. From having observed Linda Schele (an art historian and epigrapher; see [24]) at Palenque, Mexico, and in Austin, Texas, I saw the power of enthusiastic presentation and the need to make difficult things relevant and interesting to a lay audience. Based on a series of academic couples—Pru and Don Rice, Joyce Marcus and Kent Flannery, Paula and Jerry Sabloff—Arlen and I could see that the future as an academic couple was a possibility, although it often required flexibility on the part of the couple. For the Rices, it meant jobs at two different universities until they finally ended up together at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale; Flannery and Marcus were both employed in the same department at the University of Michigan; and the Sabloffs followed different but complementary career paths.

Life as a graduate student was not perfect. There were some otherwise well-intentioned faculty who committed micro-aggressions that almost caused me to change directions. Besides occasionally being ignored or being left out of scenarios because I was a woman, e.g., [25] (p. 41), one upsetting suggestion from several Penn faculty members was that I should think of an area of focus outside of Mesoamerican archaeology, especially since both Arlen and I were studying Maya archaeology and since two jobs would be hard to come by (much less two jobs in the same field at the same university). While Arlen and I are the same age and had started undergraduate school at the same time, he had sub-matriculated into the graduate program during his senior year as an undergraduate and thus established himself as a graduate student first. While the suggestions and prodding that I change focus might have appeared to make sense, it would have been useful to have a conversation with each of us and not just with me. Their words were impactful; I almost switched fields. Instead of commencing fieldwork in Mesoamerica, I tentatively planned to undertake research in southeast Asia (specifically Malaysia) with Chet Gorman [26] shortly after comprehensive exams at the end of my first year. I was excited about doing archaeology in that part of the world, but I came to realize that my real interest was in the Americas. My second attempt at doing something different was to spend a month in the Chontales region of Nicaragua looking for archaeological remains on which to do my dissertation research; this was foiled by the ensuing political turmoil and revolution in Nicaragua [27,28]. Ultimately, I decided to ignore the faculty's sage advice for what may have been a harder path in Maya archaeology but was clearly the best path for me. Both Arlen and I continued to focus on the ancient Maya, although we did diversify our research interests in terms of ceramics and human skeletal remains and also selected different countries (Guatemala and Belize) and sites (Tayasal and Santa Rita Corozal) in which to undertake research (although still working as a team).

During the course of refining my dissertation topic, it became clear that some faculty were fine with or even enthusiastic about working with women but that this was not the case for all faculty. Ironic in retrospect (given that I have worked at Caracol for almost four decades), one of the doors that closed—and with a stated question about whether sharing data with a woman was appropriate—was the ability to work on the hieroglyphic monuments from Caracol, Belize (subsequently published, [29]). However, while some avenues for dissertation research closed off, others opened up. Elizabeth Graham (University College London), then the Archaeological Commissioner in Belize—an unusual role for a woman at that time—came to visit the Penn Museum in the Fall of 1977 to ask about the return of carved stone monuments to Belize. I ended up spending time with her in the archaeology lab, and she encouraged me to think about working in Belize. By this time, my interests were particularly focused on the interplay between

history and archaeology, and I was quite familiar with the Postclassic Period remains that were known from northern Belize [30,31]. Thus, after it became clear that Nicaragua was not a possibility, I was determined to work at Santa Rita Corozal in northern Belize [32]. In the Spring of 1978, Norman Hammond [33] offered the use of his project base at Cuello as a springboard for carrying out preliminary feasibility work in Belize that summer.

The first part of my dissertation research took place at Nohmul in northern Belize, using Norman Hammond's Cuello project camp as a weekend "retreat." Weekdays and half of Saturday were spent on-site with a crew of five excavators. For seven weeks, Arlen and I camped in a mosquito tent within a cane field with a rustic toilet, bathing only on weekends when we returned to Cuello. The five excavators that we employed brought us a small pot of beans for lunch each day. The experiences at Nohmul during 1978 were excavation only—with a nightly walk to "town" to get an "ideal" (Quench Aid inside a refilled and chilled Coca Cola bottle). Saturday and Sunday nights were spent in our hammock in the Cuello camp, but even this idyllic situation was not devoid of many of the same problems faced today by female graduate students (even married ones) in field situations [34]. Brought back to Cuello early on a Friday, ostensibly to help with a Preclassic burial and leaving Arlen at Nohmul until the next day, I was "offered the opportunity" to decide in whose hammock I wanted to spend the night. It was not the only proposition or unwanted advance I was to receive. A generation earlier, those situations might not have occurred to the same degree but only because Maya archaeological projects often did not permit women in the field. When they were present, archaeological projects before the 1970s largely assigned women to the laboratory. For instance, in 1961, the University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project "kept to the prevailing division of labor with men running the surveys and women—if there were any present—taking care of the field laboratory. A woman field director would have been inconceivable at that time. Some projects, such as those of the Harvard Peabody Museum, would not take women staff into the field" [8] (p. 10). Breaking from this gendered past, archaeological projects in Belize were among the first to host women as permit holders and project directors [35,36].

Directing my archaeological project in northern Belize at Santa Rita Corozal (beginning in 1979) posed only slight problems for me; there were some off-color jokes from the local male excavators and perhaps more visits to the site from then archaeological commissioner Harriot Topsey [37]. I have found in our work in the central Cayo District of Belize that the local community, while very supportive of our archaeological work, often assumes that project directors are male, in spite of a proliferation of female directors in this region [35]; thus, the assumption or perhaps etiquette often was and still is that Arlen is Dr. Chase and that I am Mrs. Chase. Public perception of archaeologists is still male-focused both in Belize and in the U.S. Yet, because of Liz Graham's legacy as an early archaeological commissioner of Belize, the Department (now Institute) of Archaeology has attempted to incorporate women into their ranks, and I am especially pleased to have been the co-chair of Melissa Badillo's dissertation [38] while she was on leave from the Institute. Melissa is the first female archaeologist from Belize to receive her Ph.D., and hopefully, she will help foster a change in public perception.

3. University Life

After graduation, I spent one year as a lecturer at Princeton while Arlen was an acting assistant dean in advising at Penn. From there, we moved to the University of Central Florida (UCF) in 1984 at a time that spousal hiring was not common. Archaeology couples were literally sharing one salary at 1/2 each or, alternatively, being given 2/3 and 2/3 positions if in fact they were able to get employment at the same institution. UCF offered us both full-time positions with the ability to do a field research project in the Maya area with students each spring, and despite questions from Penn about whether we would continue to be research-focused in Florida (some in the northeast saw Florida primarily as a place to retire), we moved to Orlando—and stayed there for 32 years.

Fellow faculty members, however, were not always kind to a married couple (see [39] (p. 36) for another example). Even though both of us taught full course loads, it was suggested early on by some of our colleagues that we should be sharing an office and a computer (otherwise, we had twice what everyone else had). When we went up for promotion, we were asked to indicate who had undertaken the major work for our various co-authored articles. There was not the sense that work could be equally co-authored; the same attitude occurred with grants, as there was an assumption that there could only be one Principal Investigator. When we went up for promotion and tenure (P&T), other biases appeared, especially as we went up at the same time. Comments from the P&T committee commending Arlen for serving in the faculty senate hit a raw note since I had been the only one of us to serve in the senate at that time (Arlen subsequently served as faculty senate chair for two years). In addition, if there were any awards we could apply for, it was suggested that we not apply at the same time because we would cancel each other out, and neither of us would be a recipient. This was advice that we initially balked at and ignored but that turned out to be "oh so true." As a result, other than for tenure and promotion, we always applied for things separately in different years—whether for teaching or research awards.

Upon the recommendation of a senior academic leader, I ultimately went into academic administration. While I had never intended to follow that path, my skills and experiences were well-suited to both the big picture and small details; more importantly, this path gave me the opportunity to make a difference in faculty lives and the student experience, providing resources for students, faculty, and staff from which I had sometimes been barred. My path ultimately helped assure that both Arlen and I were seen as distinct individuals. At the time that I was promoted to full professor in 1995, there were very few women at this rank at UCF. I found myself being assigned to an abundance of committees; I learned to think ahead and quickly, usually going into a committee meeting with a chair nomination in mind so that the committee did not automatically assign that role to me. Over the years, I not only served on committees but in various administrative roles, eventually becoming a vice provost and then the interim provost (twice) for UCF. Meanwhile, Arlen became union president and chair of the faculty senate and then moved on to be chair of the anthropology department and associate dean in UCF's College of Arts and Science. By the time we left UCF in 2016, there were some individuals on campus who had no idea we were married—or that we worked and continually published together in the same field.

4. Fieldwork

From my first field experiences in the U.S. and Central America, fieldwork became an important, centering experience and a necessary part of every year even when doing administration.

Together, we did what now seem to be crazy things. We decided that, after working at Santa Rita Corozal, we wanted to move further back in time and research at a site where there was Maya history in hieroglyphic texts that could be combined with archaeology [35]. Caracol was an obvious choice in some ways but was also logistically difficult. Setting up camp at a site that was only accessible by rough dirt roads some 56 miles from the nearest town and where there was no potable water source, no electricity, and no easy communication system was tricky (we completely missed any news about the entire Gulf War in 1991). In contrast to many academic mothers in archaeology [40], I continued to carry out fieldwork on an annual basis after having children. However, bringing children to the field yearly (ranging in age from 2 1/2 months old through 18 years old) and during the regular school year was a risk in many ways. Luckily, all three of our children not only survived their fieldwork experiences in an archaeological camp but also were able to take away knowledge and skills important to them in later life whether in archaeology (Adrian), computer science (Aubrey), or mechanical engineering (Elyse).

When beginning in graduate school, I had been overtly asked if I planned to have children, being explicitly told (repeatedly) that children and academic life did not mix; if I

intended to have a family, it would mean I was not serious about being an archaeologist. One otherwise sterling advisor, noting that I had a dog, advised me that maternal instincts were not a good indication of viability in academia. Having children before earning tenure was unheard of, and we delayed having children until there was no doubt that I had accomplished what was necessary for tenure and promotion. After the birth of our first child, I went back into the classroom within three days, determined to show that children would not impact my teaching or research career. Likewise, there was no way that I intended to stay home during the field season—or leave the children with someone else—so we did home schooling in the jungle, using Caracol as the laboratory for their work as well as ours.

I saw first-hand how the culture of academia regarding children can change. At UCF, faculty gatherings were transformed over time from adults only to becoming family-friendly events—and I also witnessed the difference it made in building a sense of community: one that grew stronger rather than weaker as the faculty numbers increased, something also noted for other parts of academia [41].

Having women working in the field made and makes a difference in many different ways, one being in the interpretation of the archaeological record and reconstruction of the past (see [42–44]). Our projects in Belize (at Santa Rita Corozal and Caracol) were among the first to show the number of women that had been placed within Maya tombs [45–48], something previously almost universally associated only with rulers and men.

Fieldwork helped bring me skills and experiences that are useful in my career—within anthropology and within higher education in general. Working with budgets and payroll in the field helped me manage far larger university budgets. Having everyone living on site in the jungle at Caracol made it important to prioritize needs; being sure that camp was safe and that the kitchen was well-supplied with staples always came first with project community and the archaeological enterprise close behind; those life skills continue to help me with strategic and tactical planning. Working with individuals that have backgrounds far different than my own (whether academic or other) provided people skills and a foundation for tasks ranging from committee work to collective bargaining. Among my fondest memories was my time spent outside my own academic department and background as interim chair of the Department of Theatre at UCF, working with faculty to build their program and to enhance department collaboration. We worked on a variety of things: scheduling the theater season as a "team of the whole," creating clarity in annual evaluation standards and procedures that fit the diverse interests and experiences of a department that included faculty actors, playwrights, and technical specialists who all worked in different venues (on campus, in the Orlando Shakespeare Theater, in a children's theater, internationally, and virtually).

5. Administration

One key piece of my archaeological experience that has carried over to other aspects of my career is based on working over a long duration with what is on hand and building on those resources in ways that can lead to results that one might not expect and that can even be spectacular. The archaeological work at Caracol, Belize, is a great example of what persistence and long-term efforts can bring to archaeological understanding [45,49]. Yet another example of positive change over time is UCF, an organization that went from being a small regional university with a conjoined sociology, anthropology, and social work department in 1983 to a large, 70,000 student, power-house research institution with a stand-alone anthropology department that now offers its own graduate Ph.D.

However, it is sometimes difficult for someone within a university to progress in academic administration within their own institution and many have to change institutions to move their careers forward. That held true for me, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) proved to be my perfect next step. Going there as Executive Vice President and Provost in 2016 meant that I could focus on giving back and on using all my previous life experiences to "pay it forward." UNLV is a minority-serving, Hispanic-serving, and Asian

American Native American Pacific Islander (AANASPI)-serving educational institution that was building its research capacity. In conjunction with a great team of colleagues, I was able to enhance the success (persistence and graduation) of under-represented minority and first-generation students. Near and dear to my heart were efforts to improve the climate for women students in STEM, a particularly problematic area in academia [50,51]. Working with the faculty senate, we also revised faculty promotion and tenure regulations to take away some of the angst of the process by providing clear-cut guidelines. In tandem with the Women's Council, we worked to make campus more family-friendly, increasing the number of lactation rooms and establishing accessible parking for pregnant mothers. Efforts also led to more gender neutral, ADA-compliant restrooms with changing areas. Together with President Len Jessup, we also developed a mechanism to provide educational benefits for the families of our classified staff members. In addition, at the same time, we built research capacity through hires and faculty support. I am continuing that tradition at my present institution (Claremont Graduate University) but with graduate students. In this role, again with a strong team of colleagues, I am focused on creating structures and programs to help students build the skills and experiences they need to succeed rather than trying to "weed" them out, as was my graduate experience at Penn, where a significant part of any incoming class dropped out after their first year. In contrast to what I went through as a graduate student, we have created a true first year experience, a Thrive Program for students of color, writing bootcamps, and mentoring and advising programs, all working in tandem to build the framework for not only academic success but also for that important sense of belonging [52,53].

There are numerous surveys indicating that women are more likely to indicate that their career was interrupted by family life than men [54] (pp. 167–168) [55] (p. 106). There were clearly occasions when I spent more time with our children than did my husband (e.g., birthday parties, science fair projects, programming competitions, and driving lessons). Having children did interrupt my career, especially in terms of not wanting to move academic institutions for advanced career opportunities until they were out of high school (so as not to disrupt their lives and friendships). However, these decisions were always my choice and not anything I would change. That being said, my husband was and is always willing to take up the slack; for example, he took over most of the cooking duties once I started in administration to the point that our children did not appear to remember that I had ever cooked at all, with the possible exception of holiday traditions. He has been willing to move with me to other institutions even if it meant that he lost seniority, status, and long-standing colleagues. This would not have been typical or expected at the point that I entered the field.

When I began my academic journey, women were traditionally not excavating in the field but were often found in the laboratory, cataloguing and conserving artifacts, or creating illustrations [8]. Some aspects of being a woman in archaeology are much improved, but others are still problematic. Now, there are far more women in Mesoamerican archaeology and not only in the laboratory but carrying out excavation and serving in field director roles, e.g., [35,36]. Much of what has happened in archaeology mirrors what is taking place in academia in general, where even over the last few years, we have seen increases in women in tenured and tenure-track assistant, associate, and professor levels [56] (p. 156). In spite of this progression being an extremely "leaky pipeline" [57,58], the role of women in leadership is also changing. Women now comprise 30% of all college presidents [59]—although the highest representation is in non-research-oriented community colleges at 36% [60]. Many of the underlying issues of fieldwork remain, but subsequent to the #MeToo movement [61,62], it is at least easier to call these inequities out and to get action in response. Institutional roles regarding faculty–student relationships have also changed over the years. While such relationships were once accepted and relatively common, most universities have now banned them because of the inherent power imbalance [63].

I also would be remiss if I did not note that I have worked with many men (my husband included) who endeavor to move women and underserved minority faculty and staff members forward. This is further mirrored in my participation in two university executive cabinets (at UNLV and CGU) that were composed entirely or nearly entirely of female vice presidents. Through collective action, the academic field has and is changing. However, in archaeology and in higher education in general, there is still ample room for improving equity and inclusion.

6. Conclusions: Then and Now

The field of archaeology and women's relationship to the discipline have substantially changed in the last 100 years, especially in the Maya area. Maya archaeology has moved beyond a field dominated by privileged and powerful men to include a wide array of female scholars. Originally practiced by men, many of whom were wealthy and did not need gainful employment in the field (e.g., [64]), much changed after World War II, with the expansion of educational benefits to veterans, effectively broadening access to archaeology in universities. Additionally, the creation of the National Science Foundation provided an avenue for research funding outside of traditional sources (museums and patrons; [65]). While eligible for these new opportunities, women were under-represented in universities and academia as a whole—and it has taken some time for us to increase our presence.

Universities have gone from being primarily attended by male students to having a majority of students that are female (e.g., [66]). This transition was in its incipient stages when I started at university in 1971. Women began to enter the field of archaeology in larger numbers in the 1970s, but academic institutions and long-standing tenured faculty have been slow to embrace necessary changes, meaning that many of the same problems I faced still exist but are now compounded by the effects of privilege, power, and race [67]. Importantly, however, these issues are not binary but intersectional [68,69] and much broader than archaeology alone. Thus, it is imperative that we not only tell our stories but that we also give back and pay forward—serving as mentors and role models, building community, and working to remove barriers to success for those that come after us. I see the present time as similar in some ways to when I initially entered university life some 50 years ago. The COVID pandemic of 2020–2021 has re-invigorated introspection and calls for societal change that hopefully will again transform both academia and archaeology.

Over the course of my career, there is much that is the same and much that has changed relative to women in archaeology and academia. Female field archaeologists have become more common and prominent. Women are also more likely to be found in tenured, tenure-track, and academic administration positions. Transgressions and disparities remain, but women now have a greater voice than existed in the past because more have persevered, had success in their careers, and are actively serving as role models.

Archaeology is perhaps even more exciting and engaging than it was in my early years as an undergraduate student. Advances based in new techniques and technologies—lidar, ancient DNA, and isotopic analyses—are helping us answer questions about the past that we would not have dreamed we could approach with archaeological data. In spite of these intellectual advances, there are aspects of the field that have not changed fast enough. While more women have succeeded within archaeology, not enough of us have described the challenges that we faced as we navigated our careers.

My experiences highlight time-honored constants that can help with forward movement. The first is the importance of embracing different experiences and viewpoints. All of my lived experiences have made me a better archaeologist and administrator and vice versa. The second is the value of working with what exists and building on it to improve and to learn. This is as true for archaeology as it is for our academic institutions. The third is the need to give back and pay forward to help those who follow us. Our lived experiences are for naught if we do not pave a better boulevard into the future. Finally and perhaps most importantly, we each need to find our own path—rather than a prescribed one—sometimes one step at a time.

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