The Social Network of US Academic Anthropology
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Introduction

If you're currently looking to break into the academic job market, some people will say that things are competitive and that you need to get "pubs" out there to signal that you're a productive scholar. Others will tell to "work your network" if you want to make things happen for yourself. But some people will tell you point blank: "things are fucked."

In this paper, I'm not going to talk about how the neoliberal university has made things especially fucked—although, surely, a worthy argument can be made there. Instead, I want to examine how hiring networks within US academic anthropology may contribute to – or at the very least reflect – embedded hierarchies within the discipline. Past research on US academic hiring networks in other disciplines has shown evidence of systematic inequality and hierarchy, attributed at least in part to the influence of academic prestige, which is not necessarily a reflection of merit or academic productivity (Burris 2004; Clauset et al. 2015; Mai et al. 2015). In this paper, my colleagues and I employ social network analysis (SNA) methods to examine US academic anthropology's hiring network, and we identify some statistical factors that may help to explain its structure.

Using anthropology departments' websites, we gathered information on all tenured and tenure-track faculty in PhD-granting anthropology programs in the US, totaling 1,918 individuals in all. For each faculty member, we noted their current institution and PhD-granting institution, which we treated as a "tie" between those academic programs. With these data, we investigated the following research questions:

1. Which universities are most central (and thus, influential) in the network?

2. Does centrality in the network relate to measures of productivity (e.g. faculty publications, citations, grants, and awards) and/or institutional prestige (e.g. U.S. News & World Report rank)?

Given the challenges facing recent PhDs in attaining secure academic positions that pay a living wage, one motivation behind this study is to provide current and aspiring graduate students with more information regarding the "playing field" of US academic anthropology. A second motivation is to highlight the need for turning our analytic gaze as anthropologists toward the conditions of production in which we work (Bourdieu 1988; see also Wacquant 1989). If the current social network is dissatisfactory for the majority of academic anthropologists in the US, then we must consider how it can be reconfigured in ways that better align with our collective values and vision for the discipline.

Placement of PhDs in Faculty Positions

The program most successful at placing its PhD graduates in faculty positions at other PhD-granting anthropology programs was the University of Chicago with 154 placements, representing 8.0% of positions overall. Harvard followed in second place with 126 (6.6% overall) and Michigan was a close third with 122 (6.4% overall). UC-Berkeley stood in fourth with 104 (5.4%), and the University of Arizona was fifth with 70 (3.6%). It is noteworthy that the top program in the nation had more than twice as many placements as the fifth most successful program. Furthermore, graduates from the top five programs represent 30.0% of tenured and tenure-track faculty in the 103 PhD-granting programs in the United States.

Stanford (61), Columbia (51), UCLA (48), Penn (46) and Yale (45) rounded out the top ten. Together, the top ten programs placed 828 of their PhDs in faculty positions at other PhD-

granting programs, representing 43.1% of positions occupied overall. The top 15 programs, which included additionally, University of Texas-Austin (43), University of New Mexico (39), NYU (36), University of Washington (35) and UC-Santa Barbara (32), accounted for 1013 placements cumulatively, or 52.8% of faculty positions in the U.S. overall. By contrast, the bottom 15 programs contributed a total of 4 placements (see Appendix A for complete listing).
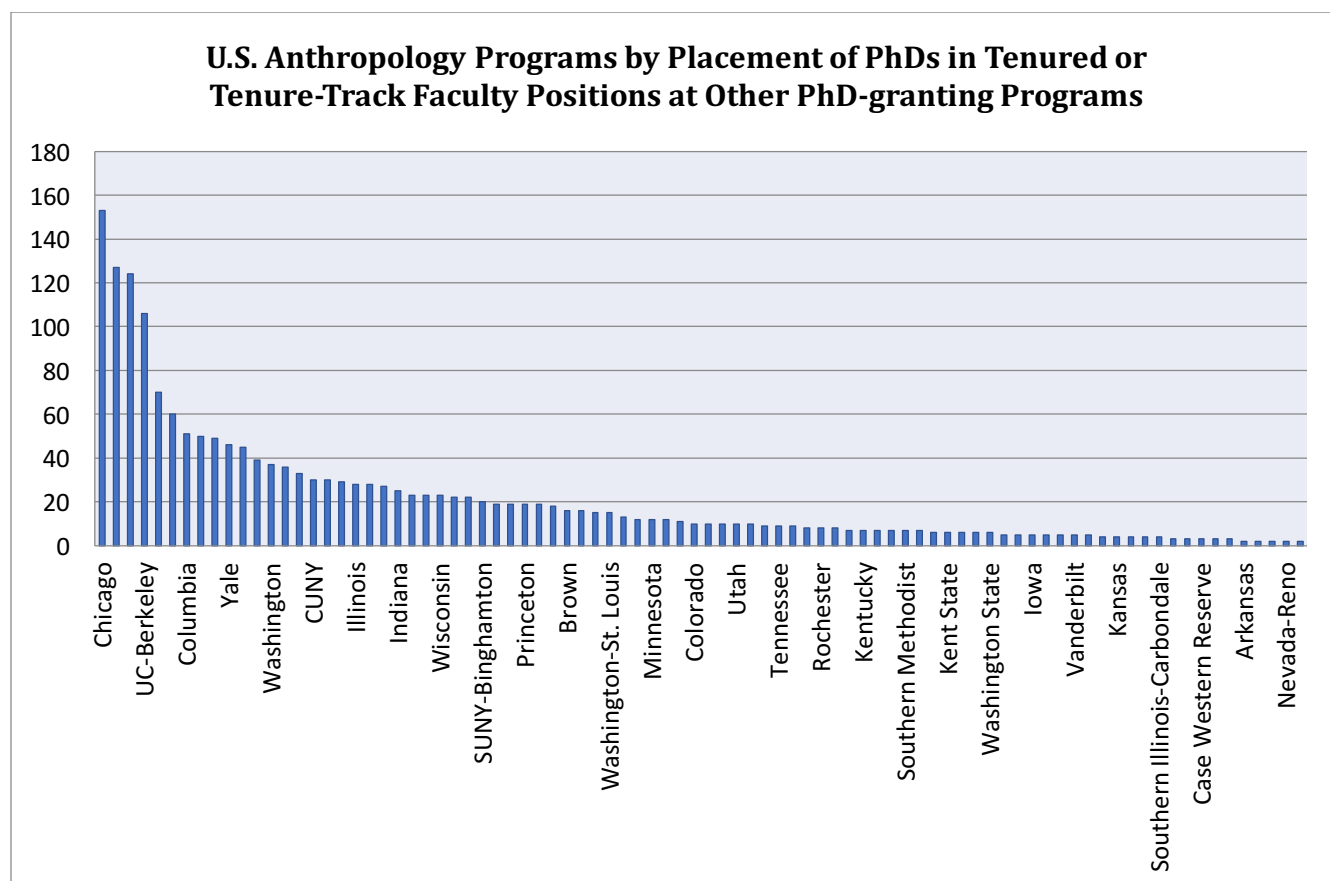

Figure 1. Anthropology programs by PhD placement in tenured or tenure-track positions at other PhD-granting Anthropology programs in the US (*Note: only every other university is labeled*)

Statistical Model

To predict the number of faculty placements an anthropology program makes in other PhD-granting programs, we tested eight independent variables: university endowment, US News and World Report ranking, publications per faculty, average citations per faculty, percentage of

faculty with grants, awards per faculty member, average GRE score of graduate students, and average number of PhDs graduated per year (2002-2006)[1]. We limited this analysis to the time frame of 2000 to 2016 to assess only the most recent data and to control for changes in departmental prominence over time. After running several exploratory analyses, we dropped three variables from the model that offered little explanatory power or that overlapped significantly with other variables, and thus presented problems of multicollinearity. These excluded variables were, notably, the US News and World Rank, publications per faculty, percentage of faculty with grants. With the five remaining variables – university endowment, citations per faculty, awards per faculty, average GRE scores of grad students, average number of PhDs graduated per year – our model produced an r-square value of .785, thus explaining 78.5% of the variation in placements across programs (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Fixed effect components of selected model of total PhD grad placements by program

	Estimate	Std. Error	2.50% CI	97.50% CI	P-value
(Intercept)	6.336893	1.060391	5.643297	7.098078	0.000
Endowment.c	1.020832	1.007910	1.004548	1.037969	0.009
Avg citations per faculty.c	1.244430	1.107927	1.011655	1.528398	0.033
Awards per faculty.c	1.151029	1.051461	1.041091	1.275406	0.005
Avg GRE scores.c	1.004584	1.001504	1.001617	1.007598	0.002
Avg# phds graduated 2002-2006.c	1.148243	1.015579	1.114436	1.183532	0.000

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[1] The latter 6 variables were drawn from the National Research Council's 2010 study of anthropology graduate programs.

The Network

Aside from calculating the numbers of PhDs placed in faculty positions, we examined the

structure of the network. Of the 1918 total ties, 128 originated from programs outside of the

network, primarily through individuals who got PhDs in foreign universities (and a few that got

degrees in fields other than anthropology). Of the 126 individuals with degrees from non-US

institutions, 57 received their PhDs from an institution in the United Kingdom, 27 from Canada,

and 8 from Australia.

Figure 2. The network of US academic anthropology (Note: colors highlight core-periphery structure).

One measure of structure is network density, which ranges from 0 to 1 with the former

being a completely disconnected set of nodes and the latter being a completely connected graph.

This network has a relatively low density of .135 (undirected ties; or .069 considering directed

ties). And, only a small percentage of the ties between programs were symmetrical, or reciprocated. Even when ties were reciprocated, they were rarely balanced. An examination of the interactions between the top five programs is particularly revealing in this regard. Chicago, the most successful program, placed nine of its graduates at Harvard and nine at Michigan, the second and third most successful programs, respectively. No other programs placed as many of their graduates in other individual departments. In contrast, Michigan and Harvard each placed only two of their graduates at Chicago, revealing a strong degree of exclusivity. Chicago also placed four of its graduates at Berkeley, the fourth most successful program overall. Berkeley has five of its graduates as faculty at Chicago, making it the only program in the US that placed more graduates than it has received from Chicago. Only a minority of the faculty in the top 10 programs have graduate degrees from departments outside of those same top programs.

Within the network, patterns of regionalism can also be discerned. Stanford, the program with 6th highest number of placements in the network overall, acts as a broker or feeder within California. It has six of its graduates as faculty at UC-Irvine, four at UC-Davis, three a piece at UC-Berkeley, UC-Santa Cruz, and UCLA. To put this in perspective, Stanford has placed more of its graduates as faculty in UC programs (19 in all) than Princeton, Johns Hopkins, and UNC-Chapel Hill have individually placed overall (18 each). A similar pattern of regionalism is seen with flagship state universities like UT-Austin and University of Michigan, which funnel a number of their graduates to faculty positions at other programs in their states, such as Texas A&M and Wayne State, respectively.

Discussion

There is a small cluster of programs that are most successful at placing their PhD graduates as faculty in other PhD-granting programs. From this analysis, it appears that the top anthropology programs are typically housed within universities with large endowments and have faculty who hold prestigious awards and are widely cited by other scholars. This, then, raises several questions regarding graduate programs that merit examination. Does mentorship under prestigiously awarded and widely-cited faculty mean that graduate students of those programs gain greater insights into the anthropological discipline and superior training overall when compared to their peers? Or do students at top programs simply wield symbolic power conferred upon them by their prestigious mentors and institutions?

In the field of sociology, Burris (2004) has identified what he describes as an "academic caste system." He argues that across many academic fields, a high correlation can be found between prestige of departments in which individuals received their degrees and the prestige of the department where they serve as faculty (see also Barnett et al. 2010). Since scholars who are employed by more prestigious departments often gain access to resources and benefits that improve their chances for other career achievements, this feeds a cycle that, in his words, "results in a stratified system of departments and universities, ranked in terms of prestige, that is highly resistant to change" (p. 239).

Of the 115 PhD-granting sociology departments in the U.S. in 2007, the top 20 programs were responsible for producing 70 percent of the faculty members for the discipline. Another study by Clauset and colleagues (2015), which examined nearly 19,000 faculty placements in computer science, business, and history departments in the United States, showed that only 25% of institutions were responsible for producing 71 to 86% of all tenure-track faculty in those fields. A similar pattern has been observed in political science as well (Oprisko 2012).

Many of these researchers point out that an academic program without prestige is restricted by which departments will consider its graduates for employment, with a low likelihood of altering the situation. The reason behind this, they argue, is that less-prestigious programs seek to hire faculty trained at higher status programs in the hope that it will reflect positively on the department. However, the most prestigious programs rarely hire graduates of lower or middle-ranked programs as that would "undermine the principle of social exclusiveness" that guarantees their status (Burris 2004: 244-245; see also Hadani et al. 2011).

How should programs outside of the top 15 or 20 then use this information for purposes of training and positioning within the academic network? A simple response would be to focus more explicitly in applied fields, including careers in government, NGOs, and the private sector. Greater emphasis on interdisciplinary training, pairing anthropology degrees with training in engineering, ecology, media studies, or public health may be another route, and one that most programs are entertaining seriously. While we don't have a clear roadmap for the best path forward for programs outside the top 20, if you are faculty member in one of them (such as myself), training your grad students for an R1 research career seems questionable at best.

Limitations

As Barnett et al. (2010) note in their analysis of sociology hiring networks, one of the limitations of such a study is that examining current faculty positions as ties to individuals' graduate programs can bias results, since it will overlook positions that individuals held in between their graduation and their current position. Furthermore, this study (by design) overlooks anthropologists teaching at liberal arts colleges, regional universities, and community colleges. Those individuals who are excluded make up the bulk of professional anthropologists

who teach the discipline today. Not to mention, a significant and growing number of anthropologists work in government, NGOs, and the private sector. Some PhD programs, like the University of South Florida, are training their students precisely for careers outside of academia and only offer PhDs in "applied" anthropology. Other programs are beginning to follow suit. The network of US academic anthropology presented here is by no means a representation of the network of US anthropology overall.

Conclusions

In a recent lecture titled "Two Cheers for Equality," the philosopher and legal scholar Kwame Anthony Appiah (2016) argues that we should (and must) demand equality in terms of mutual respect among individuals and in individual's treatment before the law. However, he suggests that certain forms of social inequality may be perfectly acceptable—hence, his "two cheers for equality" (and not three). He reasons that distinctions given to individuals for excelling in their occupation or field of study create forms of social inequality but ones that he would deem acceptable. The problem, of course, is when individuals gain such distinctions because of biases that "stack the deck" in their favor, as Appiah dutifully notes. So are graduates from programs like Chicago, Harvard, and Michigan getting a disproportionate number of jobs at PhD-granting programs because they are unequivocally better trained and offer undeniably path-breaking work in the discipline? Or are faculty serving on hiring committees simply swayed by their prestigious institutional affiliations and influential graduate advisors that have impacted the discipline? Many anthropologists would argue that America is most certainly not a meritocracy, as much as some would like to believe so. Perhaps we should also deeply question whether selection of tenure-track candidates is a reflection of demonstrated merit and "fit" for a position,

or if implicit bias favoring certain academic pedigrees is playing an outsized role. If US

academic anthropology only relies on 15 to 20 programs for the majority of its tenure-track

positions, we should also consider how this homogenizes the discipline intellectually, from the

theoretical "turns" it takes to the methodologies it prioritizes. One challenge for 21st century

American anthropology is to embrace its broader intellectual diversity rather than simply

reproduce the modes of thinking of those on top.

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APPENDIX A. Number of PhD Placements in Tenured or Tenure-track Positions at US Anthropology Ph.D.-Granting Programs (as of 2015)

PhD Institution	# of Placements
Chicago	154
Harvard	126
Michigan	122
UC-Berkeley	104
Arizona	70
Stanford	61
Columbia	51
UCLA	48
Pennsylvania	46
Yale	45
UT-Austin	43
New Mexico	39
NYU	36
Washington	35
UC-Santa Barbara	32
CUNY	30
Northwestern	29
UC-Davis	28
Cornell	27
Florida	27
Illinois	27
Indiana	25
Cambridge	24
SUNY-Stony Brook	24
Penn State	23
Arizona State	22
Emory	20
UMass-Amherst	20
Wisconsin	20
Johns Hopkins	18
Princeton	18
SUNY-Binghamton	18
UNC-Chapel Hill	18
Brown	16
UC-San Diego	16

AAA 2016 Conference

UC-Santa Cruz	15
Washington-St. Louis	15
Duke-Cultural	13
Georgia	12
Minnesota	12
Oregon	12
Pittsburgh	12
Toronto	11
Colorado	10
New School	10
UC-Berkeley and San Francisco	10
Utah	10
Virginia	10
Oklahoma	9
Oxford	9
Rutgers	9
Tulane	9
Duke-Evolutionary	8
Ohio State	8
Rochester	8
UC-Irvine	8
Brandeis	7
Kentucky	7
Michigan State	7
Missouri	7
Southern Methodist	7
Boston	6
SUNY-Albany	6
SUNY-Buffalo	6
Washington State	6
Australian National	5
Connecticut	5
Hawaii	5
Kent State	5
Tennessee	5
University of London	5
USC	5
Vanderbilt	5

Alberta	4
Illinois-Chicago	4
MIT	4
Rice	4
Temple	4
Texas A&M	4
Alaska-Fairbanks	3
British Columbia	3
Bryn Mawr	3
Calgary	3
Case Western Reserve	3
Hebrew	3
Iowa	3
Kansas	3
London School of Economics	3
McGill	3
Southern Illinois-Carbondale	3
Sussex	3
Syracuse	3
UC-Riverside	3
Wisconsin-Milwaukee	3
Amsterdam	2
Arkansas	2
Delhi	2
Edinburgh	2
Georg August	2
Leiden	2
Nevada-Reno	2
Paris X-Nanterre	2
Simon Fraser	2
Sorbonne	2
University College London	2
Witwatersrand	2
Aberdeen	1
Alabama	1
American	1

Belgrade	1
Cardiff	1
Cincinnati	1
Colorado-Denver	1
East Anglia	1
Florida State	1
Freiburg	1
Freie Universitat	1
George Washington	1
Goettingen	1
Kent	1
Lincoln	1
Lucknow	1
McMaster	1
Munich	1
Neuchatel	1
New South Wales	1
Queen's-Belfast	1
Queensland	1
Rockefeller	1
Roehampton	1
Roskilde	1
Saarland	1
Sao Paulo	1
Sheffield	1
South Carolina	1
South Florida	1
St. Andrews	1
Stockholm	1
Strathclyde	1
Sydney	1
Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona	1
Universitat de Barcelona	1
Universite Libre de Bruxelles	1
UNLV	1
Uppsala	1

AAA 2016 Conference

UT-Health Science Center Houston	1
Vienna	1
William and Mary	1
Wyoming	1
Zurich	1
Total	**1918**