

Inscribed on the Body, Written in the Bones- *Contextualizing Violence in the Past*

Abstract

The bioarchaeological record has an abundance of scientific evidence using skeletal indicators of trauma to argue for a long history of internal and external group conflict. However, the findings suggest variability, nuance and unevenness in the type, use and meaning of violence and therefore defy generalizations or quantification. Documenting violence-related behaviors provides an overview of the sometime unique but often patterned social use of violence. Violence (lethal and nonlethal) is often associated with social spheres of influence and power connected to daily life such as subsistence intensification, specialization, climate, population density, territorial protection and presence of immigrants, to name just a few. By using fine-grained biocultural analyses that interrogate trauma data in particular places at particular times in reconstructed archaeological contexts, a more comprehensive and nuanced view into the histories and experiences of violence emerges. Moreover, identifying culturally-specific patterns related to age, sex, and social status provide an increasingly complex picture of early small-scale groups. Some forms of cultural violence have restorative and regenerative aspects that strengthen community identity. Bioarchaeological data can shed light on the ways in which violence becomes part of a given cultural landscape. Viewed in a biocultural context, evidence of osteological trauma provides rich insights into social relationships and the many ways that violence is embedded within those relationships.

Debra Martin

**Professor of Anthropology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas**



**Tues Sept 8th—2:00pm
Notre Dame Room
202 LaFortune**



Sponsored by The Department of Anthropology with generous support from the Stephen L. Kauffman Endowment for Excellence