

Editorial: Ethical Guidelines and Policies of *Bioarchaeology International*

The journal, *Bioarchaeology International*, was founded to provide the field with an avenue to publish research that takes a humanistic approach to the study of people within a deeply and thoroughly contextualized past (Agarwal and Baker 2020). The papers published in this journal explore pressing issues of contemporary relevance including health disparities, marginalization, structural violence, climate change and sustainability, the disproportionate impact of epidemics and pandemics on social groups, and social stigma related to disease. The editorial team comprises bioarchaeologists who focus on social justice, human diversity, equity, inclusion, and ethical principles in our research (e.g., Agarwal 2022, in press; Baker et al. 2001; de la Cova 2012, 2019; Halcrow et al. 2019, 2021; Robbins Schug et al. 2021; Watkins 2018). The exploration of ethics is also reflected in the papers published in the journal (e.g., Kakaliouras 2017) and in our profession more broadly (e.g., de la Cova et al. 2022). We continue to seek and encourage diverse voices in authorship, including representation of scholars from the Global South and traditionally under-represented groups.

Bioarchaeological ethics is a complex and challenging topic that is constantly developing. In the 1990s with NAGPRA, in 2016 with the MeToo movement, and in 2020 with COVID-19 lockdown, we have experienced events that have opened a space for culture change. In 2020, we saw heightened awareness in the US of serious issues spotlighted in the Black Lives Matter movement. Although some scholars have been describing alternative anti-racist forms of bioarchaeology for decades (e.g., Blakey 2008, 2022), many other scholars were more recently moved to think more deeply about ethical issues in the field (Geller 2020, 2022; Ruckstuhl et al. 2016; Soluri and Agarwal 2022, Squires et al. 2022). Numerous ethical

statements have been recently developed for associations in the field of bioarchaeology and closely aligned disciplines (e.g., American Anthropological Association; Paleopathology Association; and Society for American Anthropology [SAA], where the Bioarchaeology Interest Group were consulted in the 2021 revision of SAA's Statement on the Treatment of Human Remains).

Ethical guidelines in research and reporting have become more sophisticated as academic disciplines evolve and adapt to the sociocultural circumstances in which scholars operate. Anthropological ethics are context specific. We seek to uphold integrity, minimize any potential harm, and work with and for communities in *their* best interests. Ethics, policy, and legislation will vary cross-culturally and over time. There are many context-specific considerations, e.g., if human remains are held in a country outside their origin, a layer of complexity is added to bioarchaeological projects. Typically, projects require permissions from authorities, but ethical practice should also prioritize consultation, partnership, and/or collaboration with descendant communities and/or local communities and researchers. Much of this work is unseen in the publication process and it is an integral part of the bioarchaeological collaborative research approach and the outreach that many conduct. There is also work on the editorial process not visible to the readership, which is the focus of this editorial.

Since the inception of *Bioarchaeology International* in 2016, the co-editors-in-chief and associate editors have conducted internal checks on research integrity and ethics (including collaboration, consultation, legislation, permissions, plagiarism, etc.). At submission, authors must complete a checklist that includes adherence to ethical practice in the conduct of the research and writing of the article. Our policy

on research with Native American ancestral remains has become more stringent since 2020. For example, while we initially considered manuscripts with historical (non-tribal) permission for data collection, we no longer do so. We do not accept or publish any research on Native American, First Nations, and/or Indigenous communities without recent tribal permissions. In instances where manuscripts are submitted without a permission statement, they are sent back to the authors to confirm permissions prior to going to review and, if no permissions are forthcoming, these manuscripts are not considered for review. Photos of human remains from any context are only published when essential to the research questions and aims of the paper and with permissions to use such images.

Bioarchaeology International was the first international journal with bioarchaeological content to develop explicit ethical guidelines of consent. This requirement is in addition to the existing Ethical Standards for Journal Publications for the University Press of Florida, which includes responsibilities for editors, authors, reviewers, and the publisher in general publication ethics. In 2020, during COVID-19 lockdown, the current co-editors-in-chief and founding co-editors-in-chief worked to expand our statements of research ethics and consent. These revised statements were adopted in April 2021. The expanded ethics statement acknowledges required permissions, specifically from Native American, First Nations, and/or Indigenous communities and other local communities for research, publication, and the presentation of photographs of human remains. When the statement was put online in April 2021, we moved to encourage the publication of an ethics statement in every article, so that most papers published from 2022 forward include information on the consultation and permissions relevant to the specific work. An ethics statement is now required for all papers. Manuscripts submitted to *Bioarchaeology International* will not be considered without provision of such a statement.

Moving forward, the field of bioarchaeology and the journal will continue to consider our ethical obligations in new ways, as social consciousness and best professional practice develop further. The journal maintains a goal of meeting ethical obligations and adapting to changing circumstances over time. For example, there is currently an increased interest in the ethics of using historical anatomical skeletal collections within biological anthropology and anatomy teaching and research. Changes in legislation, such as recent amendments of NAGPRA concerning the repatriation of “culturally unidentifiable” or unprovenanced human remains will also influence the approaches that bioarchaeologists use. Due to the nature of the changing landscape of our field, our

ethical guidelines at *Bioarchaeology International* are a living document. We will continue to reflect upon our practices. The Editorial Board welcomes constructive debate and dialogue with bioarchaeologists and other anthropologists in these endeavours, including consideration of manuscripts that engage with these issues.

Co-Editors-In-Chief

Siân Halcrow and Gwen Robbins Schug

Founding Co-Editors-In-Chief

Sabrina Agarwal and Brenda Baker

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