



Medusa Lecture Series 2009-2010 Abstracts

**Department of Anthropology
University of Toronto**

Hosted by the Anthropology Graduate Student Union

**Medusa Coordinators:
Catherine Merritt & Renee Willmon**

Abstracts

Cahn, Joel. *You are what you do....or are you? Using musculoskeletal stress markers in personal identification through correlations with occupation type.*

Victim identification through skeletal remains is a primary goal among forensic anthropologists. According to the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, 86% of victims know their killer; therefore the identification of the victim may facilitate the apprehension of the assailant, as well as bring closure to grieving families. Determining the occupation of the deceased would assist in identification by narrowing the pool of potential matches from missing persons databases. Habitual, occupational and recreational activities of an individual during life have been shown to cause morphological changes in bone. A specific class of changes, musculoskeletal stress Markers (MSMs) was analyzed in order to investigate for any correlation between MSM expression and occupation type. It was hypothesized that MSM expression would show a positive correlation with the degree of physical activity of an occupation. Five muscle insertion sites of the upper arm were scored for MSM expression according to the Hawkey and Merbs method, on a sample of individuals of known occupation from the Luis Lopez skeletal collection housed at the Natural History Museum in Lisbon. Occupation type did not show any correlation with MSM expression magnitude. There was a lack of consistent difference between the bone morphology of the two occupation types tested (physically strenuous and non-strenuous). Although anecdotal relationships persist in the literature; predicting occupation type from MSM expression patterns lacks the accuracy and precision required for use and admissibility in a forensic context. Variables such as body size, age, and handedness complicate the occupation determination process.

Cooper, Dai. *A What away from Where? Memory, identity, and the construction of "home" spaces amongst UBC students in residence.*

Social spaces are socially constructed, and student residences are no exception. What it means to be at or to have a "home" is often expressed as a social state rather than delimiting specific spatial or geographic boundaries, and multiple spaces may be identified simultaneously as "home". Students who live in residence at the University of British Columbia produce and negotiate their new spaces in relation to other experiences and places in their lives. This involves evoking memories of family homes they have previously inhabited, and contextualizing the new experience of university within the process of moving away from former living spaces. Residence is often experienced as a liminal or transitional space between living in a family home and living on one's own, in which residents experience new forms of freedom and also of control. Finally, the residents' physical construction of their rooms, incorporating old items from "home" alongside new items like posters and empty liquor bottles, produces spaces that manifest the tensions, liberations and resistances that the experience of residence provides.

Cooper, Dai. *Protest, Control, Space and the Olympic Games.*

As the "world's attention" turns to Canada and Vancouver with the upcoming 2010 Winter Games, the image and identity of the city is reproduced, manipulated, controlled and contested in a dynamic and contradictory field of social tensions negotiated by multiple factors. Through public art and advertising (including totem poles and the "Inukshuk" mascot), Vancouver's identity is constructed as an "aboriginal" space, while aboriginal interests are simultaneously a

platform for some of the strongest protests against the Games. Institutional interests in corporate legislation of public areas, the sanitization of Vancouver streets of “undesirable” individuals, the restriction of political protest in key areas, and the morality of Games themselves are contested through organized activities and protests in key public spaces, including Olympic event sites but also merely the streets of Vancouver themselves. In particular, I focus on contradictions that arise in the efforts to reproduce particular identities of the city, and, drawing from place-theorists such as Henri Lefebvre, how these social conflicts become spatially manifest, producing the space of the city as a contested and contradictory place.

Doyle, Bess. *The many faces of bone strength: relating traditional measurements to mechanical strength of the hip joint.*

Bone’s mechanical strength is a key concept in two closely related areas of anthropological research: in the first case, comparative analysis is used to infer chronological, geographical, and social patterning in mobility and other aspects of physical workload; in the second, the risk of osteoporotic fracture in old-age – a growing problem in modern urbanites, but thought to have been rarer in the past – is extrapolated from estimated bone strength coupled with osteological evidence for fragility fractures. Both frequently exploit cross-sectional geometry of long bone diaphyses because they preserve well and are easily measured. While this approach is broadly successful in the first case, intra-skeletal variability of age changes in bone strength suggest that such indicators may not be accurate predictors of fracture risk in the elderly of a given population. This problem is particularly cogent in the case of hip fractures, as the proximal femur is architecturally, compositionally, and mechanically distinct from the mid-diaphysis. To illustrate the problem, I will present comparative data from femoral-mid diaphyses of three European-extracted samples representing colonial, early twentieth-century, and late-twentieth-century urban populations, and discuss future directions for improving the osteological picture of hip fracture risk and thus aiding investigation of long-term patterns in ageing and bone health.

Eric, Josephine. *Prepare for the Worst: Rite of Passage of Filipino Women’s Settlement and Integration in Canada, from the 1960’s to the Present.*

This paper explores the settlement and integration of Filipino women. It identifies the migration waves of women from the Philippines from the 1960’s to the current period and uses these periods of migration as a framework for understanding the barriers and integration processes of different immigrant groups. Sixteen Filipinas were interviewed and were asked about their immigration entry to Canada, prior expectations, migration process and their settlement and integration experiences. Demographic characteristics such as marital status, level of education, social networks and employment history were also gathered to provide a profile of the sample. Data on the periods of the immigration entry to Canada, housing accommodation and settlement organizations that assisted them enabled comparisons between the various immigration waves of Filipino women. Differences and similarities in labour market integration emerged. Initial findings illustrate that the settlement and integration of Filipinas are conditioned by their entry status in Canada. Filipinas’ identities are grounded not only in their various ethnic heterogeneous backgrounds but also in their global position as a group of workers in the social reproduction of caring labour. This comprises their labour diaspora and transnational identity and influences their cultural perception of work, adaptation labour strategies and the tension between their occupational and social status in Canada and their homeland.

Fuchs, Eleanor. *Non-traditional Families as Counterprivates: An analysis of hegemony and nontraditional families in the United States.*

Based on linguistic and theoretical analysis, this presentation will explore non-traditional families in regards to the state and the religious right in the United States. These two hegemonies position the nuclear family as the iconic norm, rendering families living outside this norm as lacking representation and being of subordinate status. With the theoretical contributions of Jürgen Habermas, Michael Warner, and James Ferguson, these non-traditional families can be understood as counterprivates. In addition, due to the economic needs of the state being met by families that live in opposition to that of the religious dogma and rhetoric, a chasm is growing between the two hegemonic forces. This leaves the future of rhetoric, legislation, and conceptions of family forms in the United States largely in question.

Mandelbaum, Laura. *Rethinking Development and Problematizing Methodologies.*

After World War Two, the concept of “development” was created, which led to the mobilization of development aid projects worldwide; since then, words such as “global citizen” and “development” have been accepted and legitimized as positive notions with altruistic goals. However, what are the underlying power structures in discourses of development, and what role do Non Government Organizations (NGOs) play in re-creating the hegemony of “development”? Further, what are the boundaries and limitations of NGO researchers when conducting a sociological study in “underdeveloped” nations? In 2007, I spent three months as a volunteer with several NGOs in Ghana in order to gain firsthand experience on some of the above questions. My findings were that it was very difficult, as an NGO volunteer engaged in a sociological study, to fully capture the realities of the people I interacted with; often, my role as the “Western other” changed the way in which my questions were answered, and our my own subjectivity clouded my ability to fully understand the narratives that were being shared with me.

Merritt, Catherine. *The Influence of Body Size on Adult Age Estimation: Preliminary Results.*

Introduction: Estimating age at death of skeletal remains is an important step in reconstructing life history and demographic profiles. Our most reliable and frequently used methods for adults are based on changes to pelvic morphology, an area of the body responsible for carrying most of our body weight; however, the influence of body size on skeletal aging has not been explored. This study assessed weight-bearing and non-weight-bearing surfaces to determine differences among these sites in aging. Methods: Four age estimation methods were applied to archaeologically derived skeletons of 21 small-bodied southern African hunter-gatherers: the pubic symphysis and auricular surface represented the weight-bearing joints; the ribs and cranial suture closure represented the non-weight-bearing sites. Results: In ranked parametric tests, cranial suture closure failed tests for significance and was removed from the analysis. The pubic symphysis was the best single age method. In a stepwise multiple linear regression, the first rib was the best age indicator. Non-weight-bearing sites were found to have lower age ranges and the auricular surface the highest. In ranked non-parametric tests, the fourth and first rib methods consistently ranked youngest, the auricular surface oldest, with the pubic symphysis in the middle. Conclusion: Preliminary analysis of small-bodied skeletons from southern Africa suggests that there are different age-related patterns among weight-bearing joints (pubic symphysis and auricular surface) and non-weight-bearing joints (ribs). Among the methods

tested, the auricular surface, which supports most of the weight-load during life shows more degeneration than other sites, despite the low body mass of this sample.

Sleath, John. *Iroquoian Smoking Ritual, Sweat Lodges, and the Creation of Male Social Solidarity*.

Smoking ritual, tobacco use, sweat lodges, and shamanism are well documented for the Iroquoian groups of the Great Lakes area, where it is possible to examine the meanings of these rituals within the larger Iroquoian cosmology, economy, religion, and culture. Smoking traditions in the north-eastern Woodlands are marginally represented until they suddenly experienced a florescence in popularity and artistic complexity around AD 1300, a time period that also marks the introduction of semi-subterranean sweat lodges. The ethno-historic Jesuit accounts describe both these rituals as central to the practice of Iroquoian religion. This increase in ritual complexity parallels the increasing socio-political complexity of the time, which included the shift to intensive agriculture, the coalescence of smaller groups into larger tribes, an increase in warfare, and the shift to a matriarchal social order.

Tobacco smoking ritual, sweat lodge use, and shamanism (primarily male activities) all increase in popularity after c. 1000 AD, when socio-political complexity was increasing, and agricultural production allowed females to become the dominant members of the family as the primary food producers. The increase in communal male activities can be interpreted as a response to their loss of social power in the domestic context, and as a means of increasing male cohesion, necessary in group activities such as hunting and warfare. Communal smoking rituals, sweat lodge participation, and the practice of 'democratized shamanism' were means of promoting male cohesion and integration in an attempt to increase social standing, and is evidence of the interplay between power and gender during a period of rapid socio-political change.

Sztrimbely, Alessandra. *A Fixation on Desserts: A Look at the Interactions between Humans & Sweetness*.

With growing concerns over obesity and diabetes emerging over the past decade, a heightened awareness of just how much sugar we consume on daily basis has developed among the North American and British public. With this awareness has come a fixation on sweetness and desserts as a 'feel-good-feel-bad' indulgence, one which not only has dietary implications but, moral ones as well, as people grapple with the guilt of giving in to what they perceive as an 'addiction'. All of this begs the questions: Is sweetness perceived this way across all cultures? Indeed, is it even used in the same way in all cultures? If not, how has it come to be used and perceived this way in our own? Do all people like the taste of sweet? Can we truly be addicted? If so, why have we evolved to like something so detrimental to our health? In answering these questions, I will draw on evidence from a range of disciplines including Evolutionary and Ecological Anthropology, History, Archaeology, Cultural Anthropology, Endocrinology and Primate Physiology, synthesising them all (hopefully) into a coherent dialogue detailing our interactions with sweetness over the course of our existence and how we have arrived where we are today.

Urbanowski, Elizabeth M. *Rethinking Medicalization Critiques: Biomedical and Qur'anic Knowledge in the Construction of Motherhood.*

While there is a proliferation of research on the medicalization of pregnancy and childbirth, research pertaining to the ways in which women's experiences as mothers are medicalized is less prominent. Infancy is a period of intense medical intervention. Almost every aspect of infants' lives, how, where, and when they sleep; what and how much they eat; how they respond to others; and early signs of linguistic or motor skills fall under the purview of medicine. As such, expert discourses construct motherhood ideologies and create moral environments in which daily mothering decisions are made. Scholarship on medicalization has primarily focused on the role of formal biomedical institutions while paying little attention to the ways this process is constructed, negotiated, legitimated, and contested in everyday life. Utilizing an ethnographic approach, I analyze interviews from immigrant Arab Muslims living in an urban prairie city, doctors and nurses who treat these women, and immigrant settlement workers who offer them programs on how to parent in Canada. I complicate medicalization critiques that privilege biomedical knowledge over other forms of knowledge by describing how Qur'anic knowledge and biomedical knowledge are not easily separated in the narratives of my participants. I note that this hybridity reveals the flexibility within both biomedicine and Islam that allow them not only to coexist, but to also grant legitimacy to one another. Assumptions of the authoritative nature of biomedicine are further challenged by highlighting the agency of both the mothers and the health professionals.