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From the Editor: Special Poster Presentation Issue

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One of the goals of *Landscapes of Violence* is to create an open and accessible space for people to share their ideas with as broad an audience as possible. Often times, we, as researchers, present our data at national meetings in the form of papers or posters and that work is accessible only to the privileged few who can afford to attend. This journal is committed to a scholarship of engagement that emphasizes community involvement and a real partnership with the community stakeholders. To that end, I would like to welcome you to a special issue of *LoV* that will showcase professional posters that were presented at the 76th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in Sacramento, California during the spring of 2011.

This issue was not peer-reviewed by *LoV*, but these posters were vetted by the organizing committee of the Society for American Archaeology. The editorial board sees the presentation of these works as an opportunity to move the science of the bioarchaeology of violence into a scholarship of engagement. Outreach and engagement is one of the core principals of this publication as we strive for our scholarship to be integrated seamlessly through teaching, research, and service, while engaging with those outside the academy, synthesizing and using what we learn as a catalyst for change.

During the 76th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, Ryan P. Harrod, Anna J. Osterholtz, and Debra L. Martin, from the University of Nevada Las Vegas, organized a poster session entitled "'The Dead Don't Bury Themselves'*: Taphonomy as a Tool to Understand Sex and Violence in the Past." The session organizers argued that the identification of violence and trauma requires a nuanced and detailed analysis of both material culture and human remains present at an archaeological site. In their abstract, below, they state it is important to have a comprehensive understanding of the variables that can alter the appearance of skeletal material, and they refer to this as taphonomy. In its broadest usage, taphonomy refers to everything that impinges on the physical characteristics of bone from the time of the animal or human's death up to the point of its analysis. A "taphonomic agent" refers to the immediate physical cause of modifications to animal remains and skeletal tissues. Bioarchaeologists are uniquely suited to examine the cultural taphonomic indicators indicative of violent trauma. This is accomplished by placing skeletal assemblages into the larger cultural and environmental dynamics that can produce and maintain violence within populations.

It is our hope that this innovative issue of *LoV* serves to stimulate conversation and move us closer to the promise of free and open access to the science of violence studies.

Ventura R. Pérez, Ph.D.

Editor-in-Chief

"THE DEAD DON'T BURY THEMSELVES"*: TAPHONOMY AS A TOOL TO UNDERSTAND SEX AND VIOLENCE IN THE PAST

Session Abstract

The desire for an understanding of the role of violence in society has increased over the past several decades, especially as bioarchaeologists and archaeologists increasingly engage in fieldwork associated with death and conflict. The shift toward a recognition and acceptance of the notion that there was conflict throughout history and prehistory is a step in the right direction, however a crucial element seems to be missing from most of the research. Although taphonomy is a crucial part of archaeological method, it is often not integrated fully into interpretations of violence in its many forms (e.g., warfare, captivity, raiding, massacre, sacrifice, execution, homicide, cannibalism, and so much more). The role of demographic factors such as age and sex has also been understudied with respect to taphonomy (e.g., are all ages and both sexes equally represented in the archeological record), resulting in a misleading picture of the population overstating or more commonly failing to recognize the presence of violence within the society. The lack of consideration of taphonomic factors decreases the validity of interpretations of violence, in that cause and manner of death, as well as the demographic nature of the individuals rely almost exclusively on the human remains themselves. Many factors can conspire to alter the nature of the archaeological context yet these are often not included in the final interpretation.

Through a case-study approach, this session highlights some of the most important taphonomic processes that researchers should include in their analyses, and the importance of doing so. Central to being able to explain the role of violence in past populations and who within these populations is most at risk, is the full understanding of the natural and cultural processes that affect human remains.

*Mike Pearson 1999