Towards Engagement: Exploring the Prospects for an Integrated Anthropology of Disability

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Abstract
Impairment and disability are fundamental human experiences across cultures, yet disability remains curiously under-studied and under-theorized within anthropology, particularly within physical anthropology and archaeology. Why is this the case and how might this change? This paper critically examines anthropology’s varying detachment from and engagement with disability studies up to the present. It is suggested that a holistic approach which integrates data and insights from archaeology, physical anthropology, and sociocultural anthropology would offer the means for an important and distinctly anthropological contribution to the study of disability in the past and present. Lessons are taken from previous anthropological work on women/gender and Indigenous peoples. It is argued that a focus on theoretically-situated bodies, increased inclusion of people with disabilities, and a demonstrated relevance to current disability issues will be essential aspects of an integrated ‘anthropology of disability’.

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Toward Engagement: Exploring the Prospects for an Integrated Anthropology of Disability. Heather Battles. Abstract. This paper critically examines anthropology’s varying detachment from and engagement with disability studies up to the present. It is suggested that a holistic approach which integrates data and insights from archaeology, physical anthropology, and sociocultural anthropology would offer the means for an important and distinctly anthropological contribution to the study of disability in the past and present. Direction is taken from previous anthropological work on women/gender and Indigenous peoples, particularly the use of a political-economic approach. Towards engagement: Exploring the prospects for an integrated anthropology of disability. vis-à-vis: Explorations in Anthropology, 11(1), 107–124. Google Scholar. Buikstra, J. E. (2010). Paleopathology: A contemporary perspective. In C. S. Larsen (Ed.), A companion to biological anthropology (pp. 395–411). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. CrossRef Google Scholar. Buikstra, J. E., & Scott, R. E. (2009). In J. Hubert (Ed.), Madness, disability, and social exclusion: The archaeology and anthropology of difference (pp. 208–216). London: Routledge. Google Scholar. Riddle, C. A. (2013). Anthropology is the study of what makes us human. Anthropologists take a broad approach to understanding the many different aspects of the human experience, which we call holism. They consider the past, through archaeology, to see how human groups lived hundreds or thousands of years ago and what was important to them. They consider what makes up our biological bodies and genetics, as well as our bones, diet, and health. Anthropologists also compare humans with other animals (most often, other primates like monkeys and chimpanzees) to see what we have in common with them and what makes us unique. A degree in anthropology covers the cultural and biological diversity of humans. The broad discipline you will gain from studying both science and the humanities could lead to a variety of careers. Job options. Only a tiny proportion of graduates become anthropologists, as academics or researchers. Some choose careers that build directly on anthropology, including social policy and teaching, development/overseas agencies and work for non-governmental organisations (NGOs). A high proportion of anthropology graduates work in the public and not-for-profit sectors, all branches of the Civil Service, local government, charities, central government bodies, universities, international organisations, such as the United Nations (UN), museums and voluntary organisations.