Anthropological Review • Vol. 88(3), 59–67 (2025)

ANTHROPOLOGICAL REVIEW

Available online at: https://doi.org/10.18778/1898-6773.88.3.05

Human Biology Research in Anthropological Review: 2025 Onwards Editorial and Polish Anthropological Society Perspectives

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Abstract: Human biology research in the 21st century takes on a whole new meaning with an improved range of methodological, ethical, and technological advancements. Human biologists working in diverse sub- and inter-disciplinary areas now have at their disposal access to more efficient technical toolkits than ever before, producing data that can be rapidly shared through open access platforms. However, we also face challenges with the ever-increasing presence of artificial intelligence (AI), and continued ethical concerns around 'helicopter research' using human personal and tissue data in developing countries. Anthropological Review (AR), the flagship journal of the Polish Anthropological Society (PTA), is an open access journal with a long history of publishing inter-disciplinary human biology research and continued commitment to sharing high quality findings. In this piece, as PTA is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2025, and as the editorial board of AR with a new Editor-in-Chief, and the President of PTA, we outline the stance of AR on key issues in today's human biology research. We focus on open access, early career researcher opportunities, AI, the need for multi-methodological approaches and inter-disciplinarity, and commitment to the application of ethical framework in human biology research featured in our journal.

Keywords: open access, artificial intelligence, ethics, human biology

Original article
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Received: 14.08.2024; Revised: 27.08.2025; Accepted: 29.08.2025

Abstrakt: Badania nad biologią człowieka w XXI wieku nabierają zupełnie nowego znaczenia, dzięki wykorzystaniu postępów badawczych w obszarze metodologii, etyki czy technologii. Biolodzy zajmujący się badaniem człowieka zarówno w obszarze poszczególnych poddyscyplin, jak i z wykorzystaniem badań interdyscyplinarnych, mają teraz dostęp do najnowocześniejszego sprzętu laboratoryjnego oraz zestawów narzędzi technicznych i informatycznych. Umożliwiają one gromadzenie danych, które można szybko udostępniać za pośrednictwem platform o otwartym dostępie. Stajemy jednak również przed wyzwaniami związanymi ze stale rosnącą obecnością sztucznej inteligencji (AI) i ciągłymi obawami etycznymi dotyczącymi uprawiania nauki neokolonialnej z wykorzystaniem danych osobowych i tkankowych ludzi w krajach rozwijających się. „Anthropological Review" (AR), sztandarowe czasopismo Polskiego Towarzystwa Antropologicznego (PTA), to czasopismo o otwartym dostępie, z długą historią publikowania interdyscyplinarnych badań z zakresu biologii człowieka i stałym zaangażowaniem w udostępnianie wysokiej jakości wyników. W niniejszym artykule, świętując 100-lecie PTA w 2025 roku, jako redakcja AR z nową redaktorką naczelną, i przewodniczącym PTA, przedstawiamy stanowisko AR w kluczowych kwestiach dotyczących współczesnych badań nad biologią człowieka. Koncentrujemy się na otwartym dostępie, możliwościach dla młodych naukowców, sztucznej inteligencji, potrzebie stosowania podejścia multimetodologicznego i interdyscyplinarnego oraz zaangażowania w stosowanie ram etycznych w badaniach nad biologią człowieka, o których mowa w naszym czasopiśmie.

Słowa kluczowe: otwarty dostęp, sztuczna inteligencja, etyka, biologia człowieka

In January 2025, Anthropological Review (AR), the flagship journal of the Polish Anthropological Society (PTA), welcomed a new Editor-in-Chief, Dr Justyna Miszkiewicz of the University of Queensland (Australia), taking over from Professor Sławomir Kozieł of the Polish Academy of Sciences after his many years of dedicated service. With further changes to the Assistant Editors of the journal, including welcoming Dr Joanna Nieczuja-Dwojacka of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw in place of Dr Agnieszka Tomaszewska, we take this opportunity to pen an editorial piece overviewing our perspectives on the next few years of research published in AR. As PTA is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2025, we highlight key current issues in human biology and comment on topics we are particularly interested in featuring in future editions of AR.

Open access and data sharing

We are a fully open access (OA) journal, meaning that none of our articles are published behind a paywall. Combined with the fact that we do not collect article processing charges (APC), our journal is one of a handful of journals within human biology to operate using such a model. Financial support for the processing of our articles stems from local university support (University of Łódź), the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in Poland, and the PTA, creating an opportunity to have results communicated free of charge under the Creative Commons license Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives (BY-NC-ND) international deed. Open access research tools and publishing have long been recognised as benefiting science by accelerating innovation, data and findings dissemination and fostering transfer of knowledge across diverse fields (Nishikawa and Murakami 2005; Eysenbach 2006; Miszkiewicz 2020). We believe our journal's model is particularly important for breaking down global inequalities in publishing, and for early career researchers (ECRs) who nowadays find themselves in precarious research employment positions and need to accumulate citations and h-index records, which can

be accelerated through OA publishing (Huang et al. 2024). Around the world, tenured and tenure-track positions are less common, and research contracts are increasingly reliant on 'soft' grant money, which is also difficult to secure in an ever-increasing competitive research environment where there are disproportionately more PhD graduates than there are research and academic positions. The research landscape prospects for ECRs have become even more challenging since the COVID-19 pandemic (Johnson and Weivoda 2021), and ECR publication trends have been plagued with confusion and disappointment about the commercialisation of OA by major publishers (Nicholas et al. 2024). We hope that, in this context, AR allows ECRs to trust in ethical publishing offering OA publishing opportunities at no cost.

Further, in the context of the Polish academic system, the number of points assigned by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education to a journal is a decisive factor in career progression, influencing evaluations, promotions, and grant competitiveness. The number of points assigned by the Ministry reflects the ranking of the journal on the official ministerial list and is used in evaluating the scientific output of researchers and institutions. In the past, our journal was assigned 140 points, and it currently holds 70. We are actively working to restore the higher rating and raise our journal's point allocation by aiming to increase AR's visibility, improving its indexing status, and welcoming more international submissions. We recognise the critical role of ministerial rating in enhancing the professional prospects of our authors, so maintaining the journal's standing within the national and international research landscape is a priority.

Related to the importance of making articles openly accessible is the issue of data sharing. In 2019, the American Association of Physical (now Biological) Anthropologists held a workshop titled „Data Sharing in Biological Anthropology" which resulted in a publication of guidelines for good practice in this space (Turner and Mulligan 2019). The guidelines were received both with a positive response praising their commitment to data sharing, transparency and replicability (e.g., Leigh 2020), and critical views highlighting issues such as a lack of considerations given to Indigenous data sovereignties (Tsosie et al. 2020) and poor guiding on the reporting, meaning, and various practicalities of data sharing practices within biological anthropology (Wagner 2020). In the past few years, an increasing number of biology journals have introduced mandatory data availability statements (Hrynaszkiewicz et al. 2020; Tedersoo et al. 2021), but few still offer opportunities to publish data papers associated with published datasets. We are pleased that, as of 2025, AR now facilitates the publication of data papers, which are short, peer-reviewed publications discussing an existing dataset within a trusted, accredited repository, and the possibilities of its reuse. These should describe the contents, methods used to generate, and the reuse potential, of the dataset. Our journal's commitment to OA dissemination of articles and data aligns with the scientific values of PTA, contributing to global efforts in fostering knowledge exchange within human biology research. This may prove particularly relevant in Poland, where research assessment increasingly values both open access and robust data management. Publishing data papers will allow Polish scholars to gain formal recognition

for the significant work of generating and curating datasets—effort often overlooked in evaluations. In a system where publication points are pivotal for career advancement, a peer-reviewed data paper linked to an open dataset can boost visibility, citations, and impact. Promoting data sharing in Polish anthropology and human biology will also strengthen international collaborations.

Artificial intelligence: ethical use or no use at all?

It would be imprudent to write an editorial article in 2025 without discussing the matter of artificial intelligence (AI) as it is ever-increasingly making its way into research. Universities are globally grappling with integrity issues due to students using AI in their assignments (Alsharefeen and Sayari 2025; Kovari 2025), while conference organising committees, research grant awarding bodies and journals have been issuing statements on a total ban of, or conditions under which, AI can be used in written work or peer review activities (Dwivedi et al. 2024). Of particular concern is Generative AI (GenAI), which can conduct and synthesise literature reviews and draft manuscripts based on the given prompts. This, naturally, creates serious ethical and copyright problems. While some plagiarism software now includes detection for possible AI use, the text and content created by GenAI are increasingly difficult to discern in writing due to manipulation and paraphrasing by authors (Baron 2024). In 2025, our journal released its policy on the use of GenAI in manuscripts submitted for consideration, requiring all authors to declare whether they did, or did not, use such tools in the preparation of their submissions (see our journal's Author Declaration Form). While we do not have a ban in place, we do give authors an opportunity to provide further information on any use of GenAI that is then evaluated by editors to decide whether the use can be deemed appropriate and acceptable for the submission not to be desk rejected. The request for such further information includes details on the name of the GenAI tool, the purpose for which it was used with detailed description of the use, and confirmation that the author(s) undertook a critical review of the generated text ensuring false, incomplete, biased information, plagiarism, and any authorship or attribution issues are removed, addressed, or revised. As generative AI is an evolving space, we will continue to dynamically review it and revise our stance on it going forward.

Interdisciplinary and multimethodological studies

Human biology research is in many ways inherently interdisciplinary because we are social animals, so understanding our biology must occur within a social framework (Weingart et al. 2013). Biological anthropologists work with a range of theoretical paradigms that stem from different disciplines and often 'borrow' methods from cognate disciplines to explain human and evolutionary phenomena. Our journal has a long history of publishing such research, and while, of course, we welcome manuscripts on all topics in human biology, we have had great success specifically in attracting submissions from auxology and bioarchaeology. Auxology draws theories and methods from diverse biological fields such as health sciences, med-

icine, and nutrition (Hermanussen and Bogin 2014), whereas bioarchaeology is a classic example of an area that bridges humanities, arts and social sciences (HASS) and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) approaches combining archaeological context with biological and anatomical data (Stojanowski and Duncan 2015).

Reflecting on the expertise of our editors (which also spans HASS and STEM disciplines), as submissions to our journal in these areas increase, we hope to see interdisciplinary work in auxology address ongoing issues with growth standards, especially in underrepresented populations and within a framework that acknowledges ongoing human evolution (Bender et al. 2024). We also hope for future bioarchaeology submissions to AR to incorporate multimethodological approaches in dental and bone analyses, considering skeletal data at more than one hierarchical level. Combining gross anatomical observations with histological, microanatomical, chemical, and/or genetic data where possible has the potential to offer more nuanced interpretations of past lives and lifestyles from human remains (e.g., Miszkiewicz and Mahoney 2016; Jusić et al. 2022; DeMars et al 2023; Nava 2024). However, we stress that this is not always an expectation since there are restrictions around applying some of these techniques to human remains when they are destructive (e.g., extracting bone samples for ground histology or ancient DNA analyses), such as in Indigenous contexts. We also hope for interdisciplinary engagement on modern societal relevance of bioarchaeology as biological data from past populations can shed immense perspectives on contemporary problems including social and economic inequality and climate change (Buikstra 2019; Robbins Schug et al. 2023). The journal also welcomes contributions in palaeopathology, recognising its importance in advancing our understanding of past health, disease, and human–environment interactions (Rühli et al. 2016), which is particularly relevant to modern pandemics and remerging infectious diseases. We are planning to feature thematic issues in the coming years of AR activity, which will certainly have interdisciplinary and/or multimethodological foci.

Ethical frameworks

Studying humans has always come with its own challenges, but as we navigate today's legal, political, social, and economic developments worldwide, and increasingly witness the recognition of the impact of colonial histories and legacies on human biology research in some countries, improved ethical standards and discussions for our discipline have emerged (e.g., Radin 2018; Turner et al. 2018; Plemons et al. 2025; Stantis et al. 2023; Zuckerman et al. 2025). A range of research design and conduct areas have been identified as needing clear ethical evaluation, including cultural sensitivity, selection of participants, destructive sampling and use of human tissue samples, repatriation, and use of digitised specimens (e.g., Turner 2005, Squires et al. 2020, Thomas 2020; Plemons et al. 2025). Most major journals stipulate the need for reporting of ethics declarations and have policies specifically addressing ethics of human biology research involving living participants or human body bequest programs. In other areas, such as bioarchaeology, this issue has been less straightforward as working with skeletal remains from archaeological contexts

comes with different levels of approvals or permissions, often culture-, institution-, or country-specific (Márquez-Grant and Fibiger 2011). Increasingly though, major bioarchaeology journals are providing clear guidance on ethics involving bioarchaeological studies. For example, since 2020, the editors of *Bioarchaeology International* have required an ethics statement and information on permissions relating to any work conducted on Native American human remains (Halcrow et al. 2024).

This leads us onto another major ethical issue with 'collaboration' between countries and/or populations of different economic and development statuses that has persisted and created 'helicopter' or 'parachute' research (Nguah 2024). Wealthy researchers, often from Westernised countries, conduct research on, and within, populations from developing countries and/or with historical social and economic disadvantage (Haelewaters et al. 2021). This situation negatively impacts local communities who are often not involved in research planning (or are reduced to local logistical support), have no input into data interpretation, no access to any resulting publication (also see our earlier comments about OA), receive no training or education, or any real benefit of such research (Nguah 2024). As journal editors, we are committed to upholding high ethical standards within human biology research submitted for publication to AR. As has been shown elsewhere—e.g., Naidoo et al. (2021) reported that 66.1% of African articles related to COVID-19 did not have an African author—editors carry the responsibility of not only ensuring rigorous peer review and scientific content, but can also evaluate whether a paper suffers from helicopter research and carefully consider whether it is ethical to publish such an article.

At AR, we have clear policies on ethics requirements for human research, including bioarchaeological work on human remains. We require an ethics statement to be declared in submissions where relevant/appropriate. The Editor-in-Chief is the first point of evaluation for all submissions, which always involves ethics checks. All this is in the effort to be part of the global human biology and biological anthropology community working towards a more just, decolonised, and fair science, reflecting the values of us as editors, the PTA, individual researchers, and simply people who are part of a collective society.

In this editorial article, we outlined our stance and interests, as editors of AR, on open access, AI, interdisciplinarity and methodologies and ethics within human biology and biological anthropology research. We are excited for future articles appearing in AR and thank all authors, previous editors, and other contributors who have made the journal a source of fruitful science thus far.

Acknowledgments

We thank Professor Siân Halcrow and Associate Professor Laura Wilson for review comments on this article.

Funding

Miszkiewicz receives funding from the Australian Research Council (FT240100030).

Author contributions

JJM conceptualised the article and wrote the first draft. JT, FMG, MD-M, BM, JN-D, MH edited the article.

Conflict of interest

As this article is authored by the editors of Anthropological Review and the President of the Polish Anthropological Society, it underwent an open peer review.

Ethics statement

Not applicable.

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