

## *Medical Anthropology's 'ownership of the body' and the medicalisation of Social Anthropology*

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### *Introduction*

One of the most central fields both of enquiry and of theoretical output in medical anthropology concerns the 'body' and related concepts such as 'embodiment'. Some authors even go so far as to suggest, «that it is medical anthropology's 'preferential option' for the body that represents this subdiscipline's unique vision as distinct from social and cultural anthropology (where the body is largely absent), and from physical anthropology and the biomedical sciences (where the body is present but silent).» (Scheper-Hughes 1994; see also Scheper-Hughes' & Lock 1987 programmatic article about the 'mindful body')

As Lock's (1993) and Csordas' (1999a) excellent review articles about the body in anthropology show, medical anthropology is not alone in its interest in the body. What came to be referred to as the 'anthropology of the body' (Blacking 1977) has also been developed by contributions from other sub-fields of social and cultural anthropology: maybe the most particularly feminist anthropology, but also cognitive anthropology, the anthropology of science and technology and the anthropology of the senses, to mention a few. And of course, the academic interest in the body does not stop at the disciplinary boundaries of anthropology, but rather permeates all social sciences and the humanities, a fact which Lyon & Barbalet (1994) referred to as the "somatization of social theory".

However, it is often claimed that medical anthropology has a somehow privileged view on of the body, because it is engaged with the suffering body. This is the terrain where, in the context of the physical, social and emotional breaches caused by illness and suffering, the basic contradic-

tions of human existence come to the fore and where established social and cultural orders are called into question<sup>(1)</sup>. This argument echoes the similar one that the study of illness and suffering offers a privileged window on to the inner workings of social life (Frank 1961, Good 1977, Kleinman 1980, Taussig 1980, Turner 1967). The relevance of the 'body' focus – not only for medical anthropology, but also for anthropology in general –, relies on the fact that it provides the key for cross-cutting problematic dichotomies such as *nature-culture*, *self-other* and *body-mind*. All them of these are associated at with the fundaments of the discipline as a whole (Csordas 1990, Frank 1986, Lock 1993, Ots 1990, Sharma 1996, Strathern 1996, Synnott & Howes 1992). In Csordas' view of a cultural phenomenology, taking the body and embodiment seriously would eventually lead not merely to anthropology *about* the body, but also *from* the body. (1994b:xi).

Against this backdrop, the guiding question for this text is if and how the call "to bring the body in" has resonated within wider anthropology and how prominent the body and related concepts such as embodiment are in anthropology. In particular, I am interested in the "political" effects that the 'body' had within anthropology as a discipline in terms of competition between and relevance of anthropological subdisciplines for anthropology in general. For it is this issue that accounts for my feeling of that something is missing in the available literature reviews on the anthropology of the body (Lock 1993, Csordas 1994, 1999a, 1999b, Strathern 1996 and Synnott & Howes 1992 to some extent). These reviews are excellent in that they sharply analyse and elaborate on the history of ideas regarding the 'body' in anthropological theory and how these ideas were have been used in ethnography. However, they virtually ignore how the research on the body has changed the academic landscape of anthropological disciplines and its fields of works; they leave out the question of the "ownership" of the body in anthropology.

In tracing these questions I draw on bibliometric methods<sup>(2)</sup>, which I also use as a means for a (preliminary) operationalisation of the question of what 'general anthropology' should be. This text, then, is not a literature review in the usual sense. By studying the numbers and figures of a publication count and looking at who has published *what*, *where* and *when* under the 'body' label, I have tried tries to raise critical questions about medical anthropology's claims of competence and research fields, its stance among other anthropological sub-disciplines and work fields, and its not always welcomed contributions to anthropology. Although this turned out to be more difficult than I expected and that a sound interpretation is more limited than I had thought, this approach nevertheless allows to make some relevant observations to be made and conclusions to be drawn.

### Searching 'General Anthropology'

Technically speaking, what follows in the next sections is an ex-post evaluation with a descriptive kind of question (Bussman 1995). The basic question is, if and whether the usage of the concepts of 'body' and 'embodiment' in anthropology has changed in terms of frequency as manifested in a range of anthropological journals during the last two decades. And if so, how has it changed? As such it is a 'black box evaluation', because this kind of evaluation it cannot causally explain why this change was brought about.

For this study I used *Sociological Abstracts* (SA), the former *Sociofile*, produced by Sociological Abstracts, Inc., and the *Social Sciences Index* (SSI), which is a smaller version of the *Social Sciences Citation Index* (SSCI), which are both provided by the Institute for Scientific Information. The SSCI and SA count as the most often used bibliographic databases in the field of social sciences<sup>(3)</sup>. For the SSI, there was available one database available, the *Social Sciences Index 2/83-9/99*. The SA I had access to be divided into two databases, *Sociological Abstracts 1986-1999* and *Sociological Abstracts 1963-1985*. Since some of the journals I was interested in were included in one database but not in the other and the reverse, I used both SSI and SA.

What I basically did in my first step was to search the above databases for the terms 'body' and 'embodiment'. For the search string 'body', this resulted in a list of 4.237 entries in the SSI and 4.119 in both the SA databases. The search for 'embodiment' resulted in only 32 hits in the SSI and 383 hits in the SA. On the basis of the resulting sets of bibliographic entries I then identified those records hits that were associated with anthropological journals and any others journals I considered to be relevant for to the topic. Since after this step the set of records hits for 'embodiment' shrank to merely 11 entries in the SSI and 22 in the SA, I decided not to follow this strand line of enquiry further. The 445 hits in SA and the 140 hits in SSI for 'body' were more promising. In a second step, I searched the databases for the names of the identified journals and retrieved all available bibliographic entries for each of those journals. With these latter sets I crosschecked the relevant results from the first search of 'body'-records. In a third step, I finally imported the downloaded lists of results into *Atlas.ti*<sup>4</sup> and processed them further by coding the entries by year and by journal.

Following a principle of bibliometrics, I 'resolved' (or circumvented) the problem of how to define 'general anthropology' by simply assuming that anthropology is what anthropologists publish in their journals. Strictly speaking not even that, because it is merely the compilation of words in the titles, abstracts and keywords which that makes up a record in the con-

sulted databases. However, I operationalize 'general anthropology' as being constituted by the bibliographic records of four major anthropology journals. These are *American Anthropologist*, *American Ethnologist*, *Current Anthropology* and *Man* and the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* respectively (for convenient shorthand I refer to these as 'The Fantastic Four')<sup>(5)</sup>. However, leaving aside the profound anglophone bias (also to be found in the consulted databases consulted and which itself would deserve a closer examination in terms of the centres and peripheries of knowledge production within anthropology) I see can justify this operationalization justified for the following reasons:

- 1) These journals are certainly the ones that are most often found in anthropology departments around the world.
- 2) They are the ones with the largest output of articles.
- 3) They are perhaps also the most prestigious ones among anthropologists.

Besides limiting myself to 'The Fantastic Four' there are a number of other important points to be taken into account when interpreting the search results. These are of a technical, methodological and/or epistemological nature:

- SSI and SA covered a different set of journals. While both covered e.g. *American Anthropologist* and *Current Anthropology*, SA did not include *American Ethnologist* and or *Man* / *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. SSI, on the other hand, did include *Man*, but did not include many of the journals relevant to Medical Anthropology. In addition, even concerning one and the same journal the matches for some journals in SSI were sometimes quite different than for those in SA (as will be shown in a later figure). Where I found it possible I took this into account in the presentation and interpretation of the sometimes-puzzling results. I will specify discuss this later below.
- SSI and SA also diverge at to in the periods of time they covered: *Social Sciences Index* 2/83-9/99 – contrary to what its name indicates – showed bibliographic records from as early as 1981 to 1999. *Sociological Abstracts* 1986-1999 included records from 1981 to 1999 and *Sociological Abstracts* 1963-1985 included records from 1960 to 1985. In addition, for both SSI and SA the number of entries for the years 1999 and 1981-1983 was much smaller than for the other years; apparently these years are incompletely covered and where this became relevant significant I restricted the results to the years 1984-1998.
- Since the records in SSI and SA overlap in their content due for the above reasons, the sum of total hits therefore cannot be equated with the actual number of articles in the respective journals.
- As the databases include different sorts of publications, the hits are to be specified by their type: besides articles, also relevant here are book reviews and comments on other articles. It turned out that some journals' 'body'-records consist predominately of book reviews or comments while others included more genuine articles.

- The search machines of the databases use strings of letters. The search string 'body' thus shows all records where this string is found, also including titles which talk about a certain "body of literature" or which call for an EU- wide 'body' to regulate security. At least regarding the subject 'body' the keywords were more reliable (although sometimes keywords such as 'body-armour' and 'body-shop' showed up). Nevertheless: the search string 'body' is not to be taken as indicating that the 'body' is used as a concept or topic, because the search string does not specify the occurrences. I tried to correct the biggest errors in this regard.
- Finally it cannot be necessarily be assumed that all articles that talk about the body also have the word 'body' in their titles, abstracts or keywords. Such prominent articles as Boddy (1988), Farmer (1998) and Ong (1988) did not show up in the search, because 'body' is not used in the title, abstract or keywords. The results, therefore, do not exhaustively include all records directly relevant for anthropology of the body.

With these points in mind let us turn to some of the results.

### *Results I: Figures and Numbers*

As already mentioned the first search for 'body' produced a list of 4.237 records in the case of SSI and 4.119 records for SA. Figure 1 shows the hits in these lists by the year of publication. The entries for 1999 and the years before 1984 are left out, for the reasons described above. A number of The records also showed that had no publication year and therefore are not included either.

*Figure 1. Total matches for the search string 'body' by year*

1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
221	286	257	230	255	275	258	341	362	382	569	617	761	762	625	6.201

[Databases: *Social Sciences Index* 2/83-9/99, *Sociological Abstracts* 1986-1999, *Sociological Abstracts* 1963-1985; no restriction of journals]

Interestingly the number of matches steadily grows over the years, and in 1997 reaching a number more than the total was three times bigger than the matches that of 1984. This increase may be partly due to a larger output of journal contributions in general. New journals may have been founded (such as *Body & Society* which is highly relevant for our topic), or and other journals may have become more extensive (see figure 6, which also shows the increase in total hits for one and the same journals over the years). However, it also seems to support the often – voiced argument that the body has become more and more prominent in the social sciences as a

whole during the last fifteen years or so (Lyon & Barbalet 1994, Martin 1990, Csordas 1999a). Whether the decrease in hits in 1998 after a peak in 1997 indicates that the body's prominence in the social sciences has already started to go down again cannot definitely be determined. More evidence for this trend from the following years would be needed.

Figure 2 lists the anthropology journals and some other journals important for medical anthropology which figured prominently in the results of the 'body-search' and which I found particularly relevant to my purpose. The list does not include other anthropology journals such as the *Journal of Anthropological Research*, *Critique of Anthropology* and *Anthropological Quarterly*, which only showed some single hits in the 'body-search'. Figure 2 also

Figure 2. Relevant journals covered in the databases Sociological Abstracts 1986-1999 and Social Sciences Index 2/83-9/99

	Sociological Abstracts		Social Sciences Index	
	Covered	Total matches	Covered	Total matches
<i>American Anthropologist</i>	yes	1.238	Yes	5.230
<i>American Ethnologist</i>	no	–	Yes	2.968
<i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i>	yes	121	No	–
<i>Anthropos</i>	yes	388	No	–
<i>Body and Society</i>	yes	110	No	–
<i>Cultural Anthropology</i>	yes	180	Yes	+
<i>Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry</i>	yes	187	No	–
<i>Curare</i>	yes	240	No	–
<i>Current Anthropology</i>	yes	344	Yes	2.801
<i>Ethos</i>	yes	175	No	–
<i>Man/Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</i>	no <sup>#</sup>	–	Yes	3.561
<i>Medical Anthropology</i>	no	–	No	–
<i>Medical Anthropology Quarterly</i>	yes	56	No	–
<i>Social Anthropology</i>	yes	100	No	–
<i>Social Science and Medicine</i>	yes	2.657	Yes	*
<i>Sociology of Health and Illness</i>	yes	1.142	No	–
Total		6.938		14.560

\* Not ascertained

<sup>#</sup> *Man* until 1975

shows whether a journal was covered or not in the two databases (*Medical Anthropology* was unfortunately not included in either SSI or SA), and under the header "total matches" it lists the total number of matches when the databases were searched for the journal names in the second step as described above.

It should be noted, though that the considerable differences in the number of matches for *Current Anthropology* can only partly be explained by the fact that SA did not show comments as original records. Apart from this, I cannot offer an explanation for the difference in the total matches for *American Anthropologist* and *Current Anthropology*. However, figure 2 serves as background information for the numbers of matches presented in the following figures. They give a rough idea about "out of how many?"

Figure 3 indicates the matches in the 'body-search' for each identified journal in SSI and further specifies them by the type of publication (articles, book reviews and comments). Figure 4 does the same for SA, with the restriction that only *Sociological Abstracts 1986-1999* is considered so that a comparison can be made with SSI (however problematic this may be).

Given the large number of total 'journals-matches' as presented in figure 2, the scarce number of relatively few 'body-matches' in the general anthropology journals is striking at first viewpoint. Taking the results for both databases together with the total number of 'body-matches' for 'The Fantastic Four', there are only 120 (including of which book reviews and comments, which – summing up to account for 75 hits, – account for more than half of them) out of a total number of 16,142.

However, in order to qualify the prominence of the 'body' in the 'The Fantastic Four' to some extent I also searched the sets of journal-records for other 'central anthropological concepts' of a similar order and specificity as 'body'. Figure 5 shows the results:

The number of matches for other anthropologically 'central concepts' in the "The Fantastic Four" provides a more contextualised picture of the prominence of the 'body'. In comparison to the 16,142 total 'journal-hits', any the 'central concepts' hardly seems exist in the 'The Fantastic Four'. In comparison to the other concepts as listed above, the 'body' figures is in the middle range of frequency with 'identity' and 'power' at the top of the list followed by 'rite', 'ritual' and 'representation'. 'Body' has about the same number of matches as 'discourse', 'experience' and 'self'. 'Performance', 'agency' or 'hegemony' – and 'embodiment' – are at the lower end of the count. However difficult it may be to interpret such a 'ranking', in my view it seems reasonable to say that – compared to other concepts – the

Figure 3. Results for the search term 'body', database Social Sciences Index 2/83-9/99

Total number of matches (without restriction of journals): 4,237

	Covered	Articles	Book reviews	Comments	Total
<i>American Anthropologist</i>	yes	10	15	–	25
<i>American Ethnologist</i>	yes	12	16	–	28
<i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i>	no	–	–	–	–
<i>Anthropos</i>	no	–	–	–	–
<i>Body and Society</i>	no	–	–	–	–
<i>Cultural Anthropology</i>	yes	5	–	–	5
<i>Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry</i>	no	–	–	–	–
<i>Curare</i>	no	–	–	–	–
<i>Current Anthropology</i>	yes	6	1	25	32
<i>Ethos</i>	no	–	–	–	–
<i>Man/Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</i>	yes	10	8	–	18
<i>Medical Anthropology</i>	no	–	–	–	–
<i>Medical Anthropology Quarterly</i>	no	–	–	–	–
<i>Social Anthropology</i>	no	–	–	–	–
<i>Social Science and Medicine</i>	yes	25	7	–	32
<i>Sociology of Health and Illness</i>	no	–	–	–	–
Total		68	47	25	140

body is not as “absent” in general anthropology as Scheper-Hughes (1994) suggested. However, that fact that ‘embodiment’ hardly got any matches indicates that this aspect of ‘body’ is indeed more or less missing in ‘general anthropology’.

What is also important is the question, of whether the body has become more prominent since the middle of the 1980’s. Figure 6 tries to answer this by showing the body’s occurrence by year and again compares the respective number of matches with those of some of the other ‘concepts’:

Judging from the total numbers of matches, the body has become increasingly prominent. At the same time, however, the number of the total publication output in the ‘The Fantastic Four’ rises significantly too – as do all other compared concepts. So whether the body has become more significant in relation to other concepts cannot be decided from the low number of matches by year. When we take into account the publication lag, the



Figure 4. Results for the search 'body' in the database Sociological Abstracts 1986-1999

Total number of matches (without restriction of journals): 2,396

	Covered	Articles	Book reviews	Comments	Total
<i>American Anthropologist</i>	yes	3	7	–	10
<i>American Ethnologist</i>	no	–	–	–	–
<i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i>	yes	5	–	–	5
<i>Anthropos</i>	yes	4	2	–	6
<i>Body and Society</i>	yes	86	24	–	110
<i>Cultural Anthropology</i>	yes	10	–	–	10
<i>Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry</i>	yes	22	3	–	25
<i>Curare</i>	yes	22	–	1	23
<i>Current Anthropology</i>	yes	4	–	3	7
<i>Ethos</i>	yes	6	–	–	6
<i>Man / Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</i>	no	–	–	–	–
<i>Medical Anthropology</i>	no	–	–	–	–
<i>Medical Anthropology Quarterly</i>	yes	34	6	7	47
<i>Social Anthropology</i>	yes	3	–	–	3
<i>Social Science and Medicine</i>	yes	72	4	–	76
<i>Sociology of Health and Illness</i>	yes	25	24	–	49
Total		296	70	11	377

Figure 5. Prominence of 'concepts' in anthropology

Search string	matches
body	120
embodiment	16
agency	23
discourse	149
empowerment	7
experience	118
globalisation	52
hegemony	24
identity	412
ideology	126
performance	94
power	445
reflexivity	13
representation	265
resistance	69
rite	289
ritual	259
self	138

[Databases: *Social Sciences Index* 2/83-9/99 and *Sociological Abstracts* 1986-1999; covered Journals: *American Anthropologist*, *American Ethnologist*, *Current Anthropology* and *Man / Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*]

Figure 6. Comparison of matches for 'body' and other 'concepts' by year

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
Total	749	851	936	865	864	886	897	904	1087	1004	1239	1267	1269	1295	1284	15397
Body*	0	6	5	1	5	4	1	3	16	5	10	12	31	28	9	136
Representation	3	6	13	9	7	9	11	18	10	14	19	16	53	54	23	265
Identity	7	8	11	8	7	19	11	11	25	22	45	29	59	89	61	412
Discourse	0	4	10	8	11	9	10	10	8	13	13	8	5	20	20	149
Power	7	11	26	25	30	22	26	25	31	24	29	64	64	39	22	445
Self	3	2	12	12	5	11	6	4	2	7	13	12	33	8	8	138

\* Also includes the search terms 'embodiment' and 'embodied'

[Databases: *Social Sciences Index* 2/83-9/99, *Sociological Abstracts* 1986-1999; covered Journals: *American Anthropologist*, *American Ethnologist*, *Current Anthropology* and *Man / Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*]

figures, however, seem to support Csordas' statement that the 1990 *American Ethnological Association Annual Meeting* dedicated to the topic of the body in society and culture topic, was the "culminating event in the turn to the body" for anthropologists (1994b:xi).

Let's move back to figure 1 and compare the increase of in 'body-matches' for 'general anthropology' with the increase of 'body-matches' for the social sciences in general. The results indicate that the body's prominence in anthropology grew faster than in the social sciences in general.

Summing up so far, we can draw three conclusions. First, that the body played a considerable part in 'general anthropology' and is in the middle range of other 'central concepts'. Second, there has been a significant increase in the interest in the body in 'general anthropology', in particularly since the beginning of the 90's. Third, that the interest in the body in anthropology has been growing faster than in the social sciences in general. So, what is happening in medical anthropology?

As figures 3 and 4 impressively show medical anthropology journals have a much higher proportion of 'body-matches' than 'general anthropology'. *The Fantastic Four* have "only" produced 45 original 'body-articles' (and 75 book reviews and comments respectively) out of more than 16,000 entries. In contrast, *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* and *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* alone – which are only covered in SA – together yield 63 matches (and 9 book reviews) out of 243 total 'journal-matches'. *Medical Anthropology* is not even covered and the many publications of medical

anthropologists in journals such as *Social Science and Medicine* and *Sociology of Health and Illness* are not taken into account either. Medical anthropology journals clearly exceed general anthropological journals as far as the quantity of output about the 'body' is concerned in terms of quantity (and if we believe some medical anthropologists also in terms as far as quality of output is concerned). Before dealing with the question about what all this means let me very briefly say something about the authors and their topics.

### *Results II: Authors and Articles*

Thus far the question of authorship has been left to one aside, but it is rather obvious that journals and the fields of research they cover are one thing, and authors and their fields of research are another. In effect, in a (sub) discipline both journals and authors/articles play an overlapping part and to some extent constitute each other. The former do this via the scope of subjects they cover and the (sub) discipline they belong to and the latter via the content they present and their (perhaps multiple) disciplinary identity. The extent of a journal's range of subjects and fields of research, however, is crucial here. Like general anthropology journals and unlike journals more specifically designed for anthropological sub-disciplines, they present an extended range of topics and approaches stemming from all sorts of subdisciplines in anthropology. At this point at the latest the relation between general anthropology journals and general anthropology becomes highly questionable: general anthropology journals indeed are full of not so "general" articles. Whatever else the big anthropology journals may be, therefore, they are also an important arena for the negotiation of what counts as relevant for "general" anthropology (which means what is relevant for other subdisciplines) beyond the specificity of the subdiscipline and/or field of research an author/article comes from. In this sense, articles that are necessarily specific to their field and discipline may also represent "general" anthropology when published in general journals.

Regarding the 'body-records', a number of articles can be found, which can be seen as "belonging" to medical anthropology when skipping through the 'The Fantastic Four'. Among these are Bastien (1985), Cassell (1996), Green (1998), Konrad (1998), Martin (1992) and Ong (1990). Other 'body-articles' are associated with physical anthropology, psychological anthropology, the anthropology of religion and so forth. This shows the range of

subdisciplines and fields of research, which contribute to the literature on the body.

This crosscutting of (sub-) disciplinary boundaries applies to a much lesser extent to the more specific medical anthropology journals. There are some 'body-records' in these journals, which one perhaps would not necessarily recognise as falling into the area of medical anthropology in the first place (Olujic 1998). Most articles though can easily be identified as "belonging" to medical anthropology. Interestingly, the records also show that many medical anthropologists publish in journals akin to medical anthropology journals such as *Sociology of Health and Illness* and *Body and Society*, but the reverse seems rather unusual. In the 'body-records' for *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* and *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* I have found only one example of an article from a sociologist (Conrad 1994). Well-known sociologists of the body such as Bryan Turner, Chris Shilling, Mike Featherstone or Deborah Lupton do not appear even once in the medical anthropology 'journal-matches' (though reviews about their books do).

However, taking the anthropological 'body-records' together as a whole show that the academic field of interest in the body spans general anthropological journals and medical anthropology journals. The main output of articles in this field is published in the area of medical anthropology (both in terms of journals and authors).

### *So What?*

In her well known paper about how patient's experience the long-term consequences of stroke, Kaufman (1988) pointed out that biomedicine is in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, a "holistic" medicine is called for, which treats the whole person and not just a passive body by considering people's life circumstances. On the other hand, biomedicine is criticised for its tendency to incorporate more and more dimensions of everyday life, which is discussed at length under the header of "the medicalisation of life" (Illich 1977, Conrad 1992, Lock & Kaufert 1998). Against the backdrop of the bibliometric results presented here, the question, which I am asking is whether medical anthropology to some extent faces the same dilemma as biomedicine. Is medical anthropology not also split between the demand for holism in order to do justice to people's specificities of life on the one hand and contributing the demand for the medicalisation of life on the other? Or to focus on the question of the

relationship between medical anthropology and anthropology, is medical anthropology not a way of medicalising anthropology in general?

Browner (1999:135) has recently cautioned us not to let medical anthropology be "medicalised" by studying entities as they are conceptualised by biomedicine such as cancer, stress or postpartum depression as they are conceptualised by biomedicine. She rightly pointed out that this has unfavourable substantive and methodological consequences and suggested that we rely on a more "holistic" approach instead, which includes all aspects of social reality. However, the other side of the same coin is that we bring ever more phenomena into the "medical anthropological gaze" (Scheper-Hughes 1994:230). By doing this we predefine what we consider to be relevant. This may have consequences for how people understand the phenomena we are studying. However, it also has consequences for what kind of phenomena medical anthropology claims to be competent for and entitled to deal with. In other words, what is the *domain* of medical anthropology? In what topics is medical anthropology "domaining" (Strathern 1993)? Paradoxically, the very endeavour of not medicalising medical anthropology that Browner is calling for seems to contribute to a medicalisation of general anthropology. For as the bibliometric results presented here indicate, the field of anthropology has been growing as a whole in the past recent decades; medical anthropology, however, has been growing faster and has considerably extended its domain in anthropology. And the question can be raised, at whose cost?

Some ten years ago Reynolds White (1989) proposed that there be a shift in the anthropological conceptualisation of misfortune in Africa: at one time misfortune was discussed within the anthropology of religion, whereas now it belongs to medicine and medical anthropology. If this observation is true, what consequences do shifts such as this one have for the anthropological understanding of the topics concerned, for the subdiscipline which once had been regarded as competent for a topic and finally for medical anthropology itself?

The case of the body may be understood as a salient example in this regard. As Synnott & Howes (1992) have argued, the body has always been implicitly present in anthropology. Together with feminist anthropology, though, it was medical anthropology that played the principal part in making the body explicit. The study of biomedicine and in particular the critical assessment of the biomedical conceptualisation of disease and the body has played a central role in this (Hadolt 1998). In my view this also accounts for the undeniable success of medical anthropology within anthropology. However, as supported by the bibliometric findings, medical an-

thropology is dominant in the field of the body. This is not only relevant as such, but as the body intimately permeates all aspects of life it also provides an important link to other fields of social life. It is not least this very reason which – under different headings and with different effects – accounts for the success of biomedicine in the medicalisation of life. As such the body offers medical anthropology a potent way of expanding its domain into other fields of research. Consequently, some of my colleagues are already calling to reclaim the body from medical anthropology and propose a “de-medicalisation of the body” in anthropology.

More evidence for medical anthropology’s tendency to expand its domain also comes from the study of suffering. This line of interest has been recently pushed forward by the development of the concept of *social suffering* (Kleinman, Das, Lock 1996), which addresses suffering resulting from structural violence such as war, hunger or political oppression. This concept explicitly seeks to envision suffering beyond its individualised form and beyond established categories both of kinds of suffering (disease, unemployment, poverty, etc.) and their allocation to distinct agencies of responsibility for it (medicine, social welfare, development agency). This way of conceptualising suffering has begun to produce new agendas for medical anthropology such as a “medical anthropology of political violence” (see the special issue of *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* edited by Linda Green 1998). While I certainly sympathise with the general idea of social suffering, the concept clearly extends the possible scope of medical anthropology’s domain and as such it faces difficulties similar to those of the preoccupation with the body.

I am not suggesting here, that we as medical anthropologists should abandon the body project or return to the study of disease and illness. Exploring new fields, asking innovative questions and expanding one’s view are indeed vital for any field of research. Thus the boundaries of a discipline can never be fixed. Tracing the history of ideas, developing new concepts and analysing theoretical questions, however, is not enough. What also needs to be done is to critically analyse the political and academic conditions and consequences of how we choose our objects of research. Medical anthropology has been aware of this issue in relation to biomedicine, even though the implications have been voiced more at in the epistemological dimension than at in the political one. What is still missing though, in my view, is that we must also come to terms with what doing medical anthropology means to and costs for other subdisciplines in anthropology and the price that they have to pay for it. We cannot automatically assume that medical anthropology’s contributions to anthropology are always “posi-

tive". It might turn out, that some anthropologists working in other sub-fields, for may have good reasons may for not seeing medical anthropology as positively as most of its protagonists do.

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## Notes

<sup>(1)</sup> See Comaroff 1982, Csordas 1994a, Good 1994, Kirmayer 1993, Kleinman 1995, Scheper-Hughes 1994, Scheper-Hughes & Lock 1987, Strathern & Stewart 1999, Taussig 1980.

<sup>(2)</sup> Melkers (1993:44) defines bibliometric as «the study and analysis of scientific output with the use of publication-based data.» Usually bibliometric is used as a tool to evaluate the "output" of research activities, in particular topical areas or institutions and the "impact" of scientific journals or particular articles by means of publication counts, citation counts, co-citation analysis or scientific mapping (see Melkers 1993 and Hornbostel 1997 for an overview).

<sup>(3)</sup> The more comprehensive SSCI was not available in Vienna, so I had to restrict my search to the SSI. For more information about covered journals, searchable fields etc. see [http://www.isinet.com/isi/ \(SSI\)](http://www.isinet.com/isi/(SSI)) and <http://www.ovid.com/products/databases/soc-page.cfm> (SA)

<sup>(4)</sup> *Atlas.ti* is a software programme for qualitative data analysis based on the principles and coding paradigm of Grounded Theory, but it also works well for simple quantitative analyses such as mine.

<sup>(5)</sup> I hasten to add that I do not suggest that these four journals are the most important ones in anthropology as far as their scientific output and impact are concerned. To judge this depends too much on the specific interest of individual anthropologists, their topical and regional area of work and their institutional affiliation.

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