Violence is an ancient behavior that is historically contingent and deeply embedded within cultural systems. The American Southwest has been a proving ground for archaeologists and ethnologists regarding theories of culture change and more recently the role of violence. Most approaches to violence have been decontextualized, narrow and monomorphic. These studies have limited the interpretive potential of the data by seeking simple explanations that fit modern notions of warfare and violence. Using a theorized biocultural approach, a dynamic long-standing tradition of ritual violence is readily apparent. It represents a culturally specific form of indigenous violence that cannot be mapped on to modern Western notions of violence. Yet, Southwestern indigenous people (Ancestral Puebloans), like all humans everywhere, experienced violence as a cultural practice with biological implications that was woven into everyday life. While violence is both chaotic and disruptive to communities, it also operates in step with ideology and symbolism to sustain, restore or transform communities. Themes of purification and restoration of order are pervasive in Pueblo ideology, religious practice and social action.

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Note: There will be photos of human skeletonized remains taken from publications.