Mildred Trotter: A Biography and Alternative History of Physical Anthropology

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MILDRED TROTTER: A BIOGRAPHY AND ALTERNATIVE HISTORY OF PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the University of Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2025

ABSTRACT

This thesis contains the commentary reviewing a monograph published in 2022, *Mildred Trotter and the Invisible Histories of Physical and Forensic Anthropology*. The monograph incorporates a revised and expanded version of a 2019 peer-reviewed journal article, "Women's Experiences in Early Physical Anthropology." As a unified whole, this interdisciplinary work brings together a biography of a prominent woman in the history of science with an account of the social and scientific context in which she operated. It provides previously unpublished historical details of Trotter's life and scholarship, particularly as includes her most well-known work with the US military and in forensic stature estimation, which receive continued attention within the discipline. It also engages with historical and archival materials to revive commonly omitted individuals' stories and analyze them in conjunction and comparison with each other, particularly with regard to experiences related to gender and race. It examines how these same gender and race biases found their way into scientific research, which in turn had practical implications for individuals' lives. In so doing, this project situates Trotter's life and career within the often-overlooked domains of professional women and other often underrepresented people, and within the early history of American physical (biological) anthropology.

PORTFOLIO

Wilson, Emily K., *Mildred Trotter and the Invisible Histories of Physical and Forensic Anthropology* (2022, CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group).

Wilson, Emily K. (2019) "Women's Experiences in Early Physical Anthropology," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 170:308–318.

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to my advisors, Dr. Alexandra Warwick and Dr. Helen Glew for their guidance, insight, and advice, and to Dr. Jeffrey Johnson and Dr. Brittany Walter for their encouragement. To my uncle, the late Dr. Daniel R. Wilson, thank you for planting the seed for this degree. And in everything, I am most deeply grateful for my family, John, Eve, Mara, and Nina. *Muchísimas gracias de todo corazón.*

Author's Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

1. INTRODUCTION

The book is the first, long overdue biography of anatomist Mildred Trotter (1899–1991), a foundational figure in the history of American physical and forensic anthropology. The project is all the more relevant and timely because she was one of only a small number of women active in the early twentieth century in a booming discipline that today comprises a majority of women (approximately 70%). Modern anthropologists increasingly seek more substantive consideration of the field's complicated past and present surrounding issues of gender and diversity. The objective of the book chapters was twofold: 1) to examine the life and career of a founding physical anthropologist, including key events that have had lasting effects on the discipline, and 2) to anchor on Trotter as a vantage point from which to explore the experiences of many underrepresented individuals, as well as the scientific biases related to race and sex in the early years of American physical anthropology.

Trotter left a substantial store of archival materials. Scholars have previously only used these materials piecemeal, and their work has only focused on a small portion of her collection. Previous research on Trotter has usually been relegated to introductory chapters or brief biographical notes on women in science. This book provides the first in-depth account that reaches into her personal experiences, her academic career, her perspectives on and rationale behind specific scientific matters, and her formative influence on American physical anthropology. Her contributions, though often glossed over in favor of highlighting the works of early men, were extensive. Trotter was one of only two women who were founding members of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists and she was the first woman to serve as president. She authored more than 100 academic works, shaped and restructured the US military's ongoing process of human identification, expanded and secured the preservation and

accessibility of the well-used Terry Collection of skeletons at the Smithsonian, successfully campaigned for the establishment of one of the earliest medical body donation laws in the US, and taught more than 4,000 medical students over nearly five decades. I also expound on perhaps her most well-known undertaking, the year she spent in Hawaii identifying the remains of US war losses and developing the most extensive stature estimation formulas of the time. My discussion includes novel explanations and historical details regarding how she made and missed a now infamous error on the measurement of the shinbone in her stature publications. This error from the 1950s continues to receive disproportionate attention in biological anthropology and archaeological literature since its discovery in 1994, years after her death.

In addition to contributing the first comprehensive biography of Trotter, the book represents a cohesive body of scholarship that further studies her career and early physical anthropology through two, intertwined topics: the historical experiences of the few women and people of color who were active in the early years of American physical anthropology, and scientific racism and sexism in early anthropological research. In this way, I aim to give Trotter's story more substance through the relevant and parallel experiences of others connected to her in various ways, and the very real, ingrained biases she and her colleagues promoted. This thesis commentary is intended not simply as a summarizing or reflective text, but to further weave together the book's multiple purposes, academic foundations, and themes in a manner that was not necessarily relevant or suitable for the original format of the text. It will also present topics from the book which deserve further attention in future research, such as the history and ethics of anatomical museum collections.

2. CONCEPTUAL BASIS

This biographical and historical account of Trotter is grounded in my earlier scholarship integrating biological anthropology with its historical context, particularly with regard to relevance for modern practice. Both my bachelor's and master's degrees, unlike those of many of my fellow practising biological anthropologists, were in "four-fields" anthropology – meaning I also have an academic background in sociocultural, archaeological, and linguistic anthropology. My education was broader and more 'inter-intradisciplinary' than is typical of my colleagues. I then had the good fortune to begin my post-master's career at the US National Museum of Health and Medicine, working with research collections of human and primate biological specimens, alongside prominent anthropologists, historians of science, and visiting scientific researchers. Starting from that perspective, while my career has focused on biological anthropology, the theme of my scholarship has instead been more closely aligned with the history of science, principally of physical anthropology.

The first three peer-reviewed journal articles I published were on topics that connected specimens from National Museum of Health and Medicine collections to the historical contexts of their acquisitions and original medical purposes, with consideration for their modern usage. Two papers focus on living experimental subjects in the history of embryology, and the third deals with a juvenile human skeletal collection. In one article, "The Monkey Colony at the Carnegie Institution of Washington's Department of Embryology," which appeared in the *Journal of the History of Biology* (Wilson 2012), I detail the historical trajectory of the first laboratory monkey colony, including the developmental specimens derived from it. The colony was used for human reproduction studies between 1925 and 1971 and I document how it established the rhesus macaque as a model organism for human medical research. A second

article, “Ex Utero: Live Human Fetal Research and the Films of Davenport Hooker,” concerns biological tissue specimens and documentary films of human fetuses used for nervous system and motor reflex development studies in the 1930s–1960s, appearing in the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (Wilson 2014). In this paper I examine the fluctuating perspectives on fetuses, pregnancy, fetal imagery, and fetal experimentation, along with the practical and shifting impacts those views have on biomedical research. A third article, “The Collection and Exhibition of a Fetal and Child Skeletal Series,” examines a collection (assembled from 1868–1903) of human juvenile skeletons still in use today for anatomical education and museum exhibition, published in *Museum Anthropology* (Wilson 2015). Here I seek to answer a seemingly simple question that had been posed to me: how did all these (White) babies die, and how did the museum end up with them? I then further use the collection as a case study to argue that understanding the historical motivations and circumstances that contributed to bringing human remains into museums, as well as the changing uses and interpretations of those remains over time, are important aspects of collections curation and public engagement.

My next two articles focused on the history of biological anthropology. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency laboratory, where I have worked since 2013, is dedicated to efforts that in other forensic circumstances are termed “cold cases.” The agency deals almost exclusively with the recovery and identification of military individuals from past foreign wars, which have historically proven impossible to achieve. The early stages of research (working alongside military historians) and the subsequent coalescing of identification data depend on the historical documentation of the anthropologists who originally analyzed the remains. In a paper published in the *Journal of Forensic Sciences* (Wilson 2017), “Reanalysis of Korean War Anthropological Records to Support the Resolution of Cold Cases,” I compared anthropological

findings from US Korean War remains of the 1950s to current anthropological re-analyses of the same sets of remains made for identification efforts. This allowed me to determine commonalities and continued errors when using methods developed from the 1950s analyses, with recommendations to refine the accuracy of modern results derived from those same methods.

As a practising biological anthropologist interested in investigating historical contexts behind current work, I was also attentive to the frequent mentions by colleagues of the lack of information on women (and particularly on the mysterious Trotter) in the history of the discipline. My curiosity and unique background led me to respond to these interests by exploring the available sources regarding the first women in formal American physical anthropology. While ruminating on a Trotter biography, and before I had accessed her full archival collection, I researched the lives of other women anthropologists contemporary with her. My resulting 2019 article in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* has been flagged as a valuable resource for understanding the impact of anthropology's sexist history (Fuentes 2021). Based only on conversations with colleagues, I understand that the paper is now included or recommended in the curriculum for several US university-level anthropology courses. Hubbard (2021) notes the paper as one example in framing more accurate and diverse historical contexts in order to positively influence undergraduate anthropology students' experiences in discussions of race and ancestry.

Publishing the 2019 article, however, was initially a struggle. I first submitted it to the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* and its annual review issue, and the paper was rejected. The editors indicated that it was not a good fit for the journal and the relevance for their readers was unclear. I then expanded and edited the paper, submitting it to another journal that

the editors recommended which has a broader reach across the discipline as well as a more interdisciplinary focus, *American Anthropologist*. It received a revise and resubmit decision, encouraging further development across the sciences or anthropological subfields and across the intervening decades of the history of anthropology – a fairly major expansion. I decided at this point that the best home for this paper, where it could reach the most interested and relevant readers was still the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*. I added more modern context and clarified my objectives, drawing on much of the generously helpful comments from *American Anthropologist* reviewers. I realized I had originally made the novice mistake of not explicitly stating the thesis and significance of my work to practising physical anthropologists – a researcher must always define their purpose and cannot ask the reader to connect the dots on their own. I believe this greatly improved the coherence of the article. I then resubmitted the paper, with these edits, to the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* for its yearly review issue. The editor stated that the paper could be considered, but that "it is not clear that there is 'continued gender inequality in physical anthropology' or that 'Women in science and anthropology today remain underrepresented in faculty and leadership positions...'" (personal communication, 7 March 2019). I was truly unsure how to respond. The statements on gender inequality were not simply an offhand uncited comment, my opinion, or even just the thesis of my paper, but were demonstrable, documented facts that I had already cited and substantiated throughout the paper. I added more and repeated citations for clarity and resubmitted. It was then reviewed and accepted without edits.

Reactions to this article—both the somewhat tone-deaf statements from the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* editor, as well as the positive *American Anthropologist* reviews and private comments I received post-publication from colleagues—motivated me to

move forward with a full Trotter biography. This was a book with content that some people had been eagerly waiting for, and yet others might have been blindsided by (though they could benefit from reading). Both deserved a resource on these subjects. There has also been a very recent sea change in biological anthropology with an increasing number of publications confronting the legacy of racism and sexism within the discipline. One such example is the eye-opening publication from an American Association of Biological Anthropology symposium on ethics in the curation of human remains in 2023 (Blakey 2024). I believe my article might not have received the same resistance and questions about its essential relevance today as it did in 2019. With just a few years hindsight, what I once worried was too provocative already seems almost quaint.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

My choice of topic arose out of a recognized gap in the literature regarding Mildred Trotter and the historical experiences of women and people of color in the history of physical and forensic anthropology, as noted by modern anthropologists. I started the project first from the standpoint of a practising anthropologist, and necessarily expanded to include historical and interdisciplinary approaches. To present this research in a similar manner to how it was organically investigated to produce this project, this literature review is organized starting with the narrower and building to the broader subjects that gave this project its depth and perspective.

Before beginning, it is pertinent to provide basic clarity on what the fields of physical and forensic anthropology are. Anthropology is the study of humans, through a variety of socio-cultural, behavioral, linguistic, prehistorical, and biological approaches. One of the four subfields of the broad discipline of anthropology is physical anthropology (recently renamed in the US to "biological" anthropology). This is the study of human variation and evolution, and its scholarship spans across anthropology and biological sciences. One aspect of that subfield is forensic anthropology. This is the application of biological anthropology and relevant biological sciences to medico-legal and human identification cases. Trotter, like many early physical and forensic anthropologists, was formally trained as an anatomist and worked both as a professor and as an anthropologist.

Despite her illustrious career, lasting influence, and name recognition in physical anthropology, not much was available documenting Trotter's life and scholarship. Previously published or otherwise publicly available biographical accountings of Trotter's life consist of: her obituary in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*; the website of the Washington University School of Medicine's medical library which highlights the roles of select historical

women faculty, along with a loose transcript of her 96-minute 1972 oral history; articles written for her medical school's alumni magazine, *Outlook*; and several more elusive newspaper articles featuring Trotter. Some introductory forensic anthropology textbooks include a couple paragraphs detailing her work with the US Army. The longest of these written sources is her obituary, at 1,050 words. The main primary resource related to Trotter, her archival collection at Washington University, was previously accessed only in small portions, almost exclusively focused on her work with the US military, and had not been explored *in toto* for research or publication.

Historical accounts of other individual anthropologists, through autobiographies, biographies, textbook chapters, and historical reviews of the discipline, have tended to feature White men, often to the exclusion of prominent women and people from underrepresented groups. These accounts include Hrdlicka (Spencer 1979), T. Dale Stewart (Stewart 1979), Krogman (1976), and Maples (Maples and Browning 2010). These sources provide basic biographical or autobiographical material, and often focus more on notable casework, scientific data, and professional relationships. They generally portray one individual's illustrious career and accomplishments, and do not often include personal obstacles, reflections on the state of the field, or recognition of the full range of practising colleagues, particularly women and minorities.

Histories of anthropology as a discipline have similarly focused on the contributions of White men. A very small number of people were able to publicly define physical anthropology's history and present, and were able to interpret or portray their own limited experiences as representative of all, while overlooking certain other accounts and experiences. One such publication is even unconcernedly titled "Fifty Years of Physical Anthropology: The Men, the Material, the Concepts, the Methods" (Krogman 1976). Even recently, some broader histories of

physical and forensic anthropology have dogmatically continued the fiction of an exclusively White male origin story, with references to Trotter often being only to her well-known stature publications (see Ubelaker 2018; Little and Kennedy 2010). Anthropologist Alice Brues (1913–2007) is often also quickly noted, and other women frequently do not appear at all. These histories re-hash narratives as told by the most successful and highly ranked individuals at the time, whose experiences and contributions were already the most well-documented. This is not to say that it was not a disproportionately White male field—it was, though not exclusively—but to continue to write a history that overlooks key figures, reiterating the limited version that was originally recorded about and by White men simply because it is most readily available, is to perpetuate that error.

Women's contributions, which were often obscured, minimized, and sometimes transient to begin with, can be more difficult to re-trace for biographies and may require different sources or forms of information (see Egginton 2021). Feminist historian Barbara Caine (1994) notes the value of exploring the life stories of several individual women, even if there is limited detail to discover and less focus on recognized achievements relative to their male counterparts, in order to give insights into the experiences of women more generally. These methods of group biography and examination of women's variable trajectories and contributions in other science and technology disciplines in the 20th century have been explored by historians such as Bix's (2014) *Girls Coming to Tech!* on engineering education for women and Swanson's (2017) "Rubbing Elbows and Blowing Smoke" on women in patent offices.

The need to address the gap in knowledge pertaining to the historical experiences of women and people of color in physical anthropology specifically was noted in the literature in 2018 (Turner et al. and Antón et al.). Indeed all fields of science have seen a recent swelling of interest

in and studies of past and current disparities. American physical anthropology, with its notoriously sexist and racist underpinnings, has recently sought a reckoning with its past and how that past remains imprinted on the present. Turner et al. (2018) explore American Association of Physical Anthropologists recent membership surveys, annual meeting participation, and workshop results to outline the disparities in career trajectories, satisfaction, and representation experienced by women. Fourteen secondary authors provide personal narratives of their experiences in the field, demonstrating the impacts of these disparities on the actual lives of women in current anthropology. I produced my 2019 article partly in response to Turner et al.'s (2018) acknowledgment of the lack of historical data on women. Antón et al. (2018) explore the historic and current lack of diversity in physical anthropology, with regard to practices of race-science in the discipline. They further assess existing barriers to better representation, recruitment, and retention, as well as possible directions for improvement. These two, paired articles give passing mentions and allusions to the historical foundations of these issues, but the articles are not inherently focused on assessment of the histories of diversity, representation, and experiences.

Anthropologists have written on some historical figures in anthropology contemporary with Trotter who have often been overlooked. These types of works have mostly appeared in the form of brief biographical sketches, sometimes in compiled chapters, including Harrison and Harrison (1999) on African American anthropologists, and Powell et al. (2017) and Ogilvie (2003) on women anthropologists. These accounts generally provide basic biographical outlines in informative and extended formats for a series of individuals active in the discipline in the twentieth century, but they are often more like encyclopedia entries. While these sources at times hint toward underlying inequities thorough mentions of obstacles and experiences of bias, any

specific analysis is often not particularly well formed or even addressed. One exception is a book chapter by Lepowsky (2000) which explores the life and career of Charlotte Gower (1902–1982). This chapter quite plainly describes Gower's personal experiences of sexism and the obstacles that ended up shaping her noteworthy career in ways she had not intentionally planned. What this chapter does not provide is significant historical or social context, or any larger patterns of shared experiences with her contemporaries.

Two women who were not anthropologists but who were closely associated professionally and personally with Trotter through their work at Washington University, Adele Starbird (1891–1987) and Goldine Gleser (1915–2005), each wrote autobiographical works that directly document their own thoughts and opinions (Starbird 1977; Gleser 2000). Gleser's extensive memoir almost tragically notes that "I had never identified with women… I always wanted something different, something more" (2000: 76).

A few physical anthropologists who were contemporary with Trotter also left their own fictional literary works imbued with familiar professional details, from which one can extrapolate the authors' own opinions. Ruth Sawtell Wallis (1895–1978) is the one other woman with Trotter who was a founding member of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists. She wrote her first novel, *Too Many Bones* (1943), which incorporates commentary that unquestioningly reflects her own opinions on women's unequal treatment and experiences in anthropology. Her main character has a museum salary that is "awfully good for a girl, but not quite as high as a man can usually get" (Wallis 1943: 14). In 1932 Caroline Bond Day (1889–1948) was the first Black woman to earn a master's degree in anthropology in the US. She also used fictional spaces to address factual discriminatory experiences. Her short story, "The Pink Hat" (1926) can be closely compared to her master's thesis on the categorization of

"mixed race" people in the US. In it, she explores the experience of "passing" as White in America as a "mulatto" woman. Harrison and Harrison (1999) found that writing in more accessible, popular magazines with national reach was a common method for some Black academics at the time who were underrepresented or found their content limited in scholarly literature. The literary works, poetry, and academic advertisements of Caroline Bond Day's White male thesis advisor at Harvard University, Earnest Hooton (1887–1954), also shed light on his personal perspectives and biases against women and people of color. One of his poems includes the lines "Women are the superior sex / below and not above their necks" (Hooton 1962). The ostensibly fictional works of these three individuals have not previously been analyzed with regard to the lived experiences of the authors as anthropologists, as well as their audiences.

The disparities experienced by women have been published in more general histories of science. The definitive resource for this topic is Rossiter's (1982) compendium on the history of women in science. In her extensive and engrossing study of the early twentieth century, Rossiter compiled comprehensive data on women's involvement in American institutions prior to 1940. Through the aggregating of university and employment data, she thoroughly establishes that women in science experienced disparities in hiring, pay, and promotion. In its thoroughness and sheer scope it accomplishes a larger story of women as a whole in science, but though it is a wealth of broad information across women from many disciplines, it is not a source for personal stories or life histories. Rossiter (1993) also expanded on the "Matthew Effect"—that a well-known researcher will get more or exclusive credit compared to a less well known researcher for the same or less work. She determined that this phenomenon plays out in gendered ways (the "Matilda Effect") and demonstrated a well-documented bias against recognizing the

accomplishments of women and instead attributing them to men. Rossiter provides abundant examples of cases where women have been given less credit, forgotten, mistaken for men or for their husbands, or have gone unrecognized for their contributions to even major scientific findings.

Parallel research on the *modern* experiences of women in science, sometimes including biological anthropology specifically, document the same types of historical inequities experienced by women. A similar pattern has persisted, with disproportionate numbers of women prematurely "leaking" out of the pipeline at all points along their career (Alper and Gibbons 1993) and advancing or being promoted more slowly than men in academia (Kulis et al. 2002). This is also documented specifically in anthropology by Turner et al. (2018). Research by Mason et al. (2013) shows that women's academic careers are more negatively affected by family concerns than are men's; relatively fewer women are at the highest ranks, and they are much less likely than men to be married or to have children. This has more recently been documented specifically in fieldwork-based anthropology by Lynn et al. (2018). While these studies all provide valuable data on recent and current trends, they lack a deeper historical perspective and critical assessment of the longstanding, deeply ingrained bases of these inequities.

Influences of these historical and current sex and race biases on the professional perspectives of physical anthropologists have been documented in the literature. Leonard Lieberman (1997) details how women in early anthropology, though fewer in number, were more likely than their male counterparts in anthropology to reject the race concept and to speak against institutional racism. One history of American physical anthropology (compiled by Juan Comas in 1969 in Spanish, but not published in English until 2005) documents issues surrounding the social responsibility of physical anthropologists in addressing and delegitimizing purportedly scientific

claims supporting racism, or "race propaganda." In a less optimistic examination of the WWII US military identification program's estimation of "biological race," Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2013: 8) describes the treatment of the remains, that "even in death – even in the effort to return their bodies to their families – their mortal remains were viewed through the prism of the race that had overshadowed their lives."

The effects of these biases on anthropological research have also been studied. Anthropologists have addressed the errors introduced to historical and current research when race and sex divisions are imposed on scientific data, a precedent that was started early in physical anthropology. Despite continued reliance today on these divisions, Albanese et al. (2016) found that these group-specific equations for estimating stature do not provide better results than entire sample-based equations which do not group by race and sex. Anthropologists have also recognized that how individuals have been categorized by race in research across time has varied along with social and academic views, and cannot be relied on for consistency (Hunt and Albanese 2005). Even in trying to critique or deconstruct theories of racial differences, Watkins (2012) demonstrates that by using these same frameworks, anthropologists often actually perpetuate racial concepts.

Trotter's specific studies have been considered by some anthropologists, mostly in describing how representative and typical her research was of anthropology at the time, regarding the biological race concept. In studies of hair, Tarlo (2019) found that, paradoxically, anthropologists like Trotter did not view hair's resistance to racialized categorization as evidence against the existence of race. They instead interpreted this as an incentive to develop more rigorous studies and methods to pinpoint hair as a racial determiner. In Trotter's studies of bone density, Goodman (1997) noted that even when she and colleagues recognized that data did not

justify subdivisions, they persisted in presenting the reference sample divided by race and sex, and made unsupportable determinations based on this fallacy. This bone density research has also had effects on medical care, as outlined by Banks (2011), where individuals who do not fit into simplified racial schemes (like Black or White), must still be forcibly placed within one of the categories during medical testing in order to fulfill that original dogma of separately analyzing data based on race.

For physical anthropologists, Trotter's name is inextricably linked with an error in her tibia measurement from her seminal stature estimation project. As such, this topic has garnered significant attention in anthropological literature and unfortunately deserves particular attention in her biography. Trotter's tibia measurement error was first discovered 40 years after it was first published. Richard Jantz, David Hunt, and Lee Meadows Jantz (1994, 1995) determined that Trotter's 1952 maximum length measurement description was not written in accordance with the actual method she used to measure the tibia. The existing literature on Trotter's tibia error is concerned almost exclusively with her preserved data alone, and includes very limited historical documentation of Trotter's work, often without context. Some sources, including the 1994 and 1995 Jantz et al. articles, despite the lack of historical context, are even somewhat accusatory toward Trotter as having possibly intentionally concealed the error or being professionally incompetent in this specific method. But more recently, the continued problems with not just Trotter's tibia data (Jantz et al. 2020), but all anthropological tibia measurements in general, have documented the variability in measurement methods still used by practising, competent anthropologists today (Lynch et al. 2019).

In sum, the existing literature on Trotter was limited and incomplete. Published works regarding figures from the history of physical anthropology have favored White men, and more

recently have included often briefer descriptions of the lives and careers of women and people of color. Very few anthropologists who were women and people of color left direct writings on or novelizations of their own experiences. Though sometimes ignored by biological anthropologists, historians of science have documented in detail the experiences and trajectories of women in the sciences. Separate research on equivalent modern inequities in the sciences have also appeared, mostly written by scientists. Anthropologists have addressed how historical race and sex biases have influenced the perspectives of historical and modern anthropologists, and some have addressed how these biases have worked their way into anthropological research and applications. A small number have looked at that topic specifically in regard to Trotter's own research on hair and bone density, and several have opined on the history of Trotter's tibia error, with very little contemporary documentation. More anthropological literature is now contemplating how the obvious racist and sexist history of physical anthropology may influence its current practitioners and suggesting how to correct course, but they are doing this without much concrete historical data. This book aimed to provide some of that historical context for anthropologists.

4. METHODS & METHODOLOGY

Like any historical figure, Trotter's story will always be incomplete due to the limitations of surviving documentation. She did, fortunately, leave behind primary materials to explore though. Trotter maintained extensive correspondence with colleagues, which are archived in St. Louis at the Bernard Becker Medical Library of the Washington University School of Medicine. Also preserved there is her oral history, and her unpublished history of the anatomy department at the University. Her obituary was published in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, and several anthropologists have written briefly about her. My sources also included Washington University publications, Trotter's own scientific publications, newspaper and magazine articles, and other archival sources (most notably from Mount Holyoke University and US census records), and I had the opportunity to conduct oral interviews with her nephew and great-nephew (in October and December 2020).

The book served primarily as a biography of an overlooked, but foundational, woman in the early history of American physical and forensic anthropology, but I did not intend to canonize Trotter. She was, after all, human and so her story is complex. Her words via the archival sources are one account – which I privilege – but they are not necessarily always complete or exclusively accurate. I not only had to conduct some source criticism to determine the reliability and credibility of some aspects of the dominant White male histories of anthropology, but also turn that lens on my main subject herself. This required some delicacy, since hers is a voice and perspective that I am, at the same time, intending to disseminate and attach importance to after decades of relative neglect. But I was able, in many circumstances, to note her own words as she stated them, and then add either a support or critique from contemporary and/or modern viewpoints.

My most frequent and illuminating sources are Trotter's own letters from her archival collection. These are, of course, imbued with her own purposes and biases at a single point in time, and therefore require a hermeneutical approach to engage with her own perspective and context. I similarly use historical scientific papers not as secondary references, but as primary sources of information on the authors' perspectives, which requires attention to how information was imparted and intended. For one example, Trotter's letters to social workers arranging adoptions and her published statements on hair as a racial characteristic don't stand up to scientific scrutiny, but I also provide mitigating historical context on cultural and legal issues affecting adoption in Missouri in the 1950s and 1960s that would have certainly influenced her participation in and attitudes toward these endeavors.

I also frequently use oral histories and other archival records in Trotter's and other individuals' own words, which I interweave and confirm or strengthen with other documentation. For example, I combine a phenomenological approach of aggregating women's personal life stories to then see consistency (such as Trotter's oral history comments on her low salary and Carl Cori's oral history statement on Gerty Cori's low salary) with other historical documentation in support of those experiences (such as the 1940 US census entries of the disparate salaries of Trotter and a male colleague).

Portions of the book function as history of anthropology through Mildred Trotter rather than strictly as a standard biography. While I provided the details of her life, her experiences, and her scholarship, I also used Trotter as a perspective from which to bring up broader themes in physical anthropology and science that are sometimes ignored, such as scientific error, the historical experiences of women and marginalized people within the discipline, sexism, and scientific and social racism. Where pertinent, I branched out into further details on these parallel

subjects, even when they stray momentarily from Trotter. From these perspectives, I hoped to fill in the world she inhabited from multiple angles, some of which she also recognized, and also some which she either ignored or never noticed.

My first interests in this project started with seeking content that was readily available on Trotter, and I later came to discover that many of my colleagues had done the same. But that trail ends fairly quickly. This research gained momentum when I chose to first look at a broader investigation into not just Trotter, but also the women contemporary with her and their individual life stories. This, I hoped, would also give those basic facts about Trotter's life a greater context, and resulted in my 2019 article. Taking from Rossiter's (1982) compilation of commonalities, I linked the patterned individual experiences of historical women in anthropology. This combines the personal with the collective – bridging the methods of Rossiter (1982) which aggregate commonalities together with the methods of other publications (such as Lepowsky 2000) that provide only an individual's biographical information. I then paired these experiences with findings related to modern women's experiences in anthropology that continue, linking Turner et al.'s (2018) assessments of the field today, and providing the previously lacking historical context for analogous modern studies such as Kuli et al. (2002). In this way I compiled a historical record of individuals (focused on Trotter) and synthesized that with modern analogy.

I accomplished this survey of women in anthropology by accessing sources that have been made digitally available through archives such as Mount Holyoke and Radcliffe Universities, digitized historical University publications, and secondary sources pertaining to these women. I had access to Trotter's easily available oral history transcript and other documents on the Washington University archives website. I drew on some of these women's own fictional

writings (such as Wallis 1943 and Day 1926), which are permeated with factual details, to elicit further thoughts and opinions that were never expressed in more formal or scholarly outlets. I compiled experiences related to these women's gender, as documented through their career trajectories and, whenever possible, their own personal descriptions.

In July of 2019 I was able to access Trotter's large archival collection in St. Louis, Missouri over the course of a week. At that time, I took digital images of most items, which I could later transcribe and read more closely. I could also review and re-review any pages, whether I realized their significance while collecting the images at first or not. By this point, I had engaged with the concepts important for the discussion of the history of anthropology and women, and so I prioritized content that was relevant to those topics. I was also aware of the people, projects, and activities that dominated her life, and so I could identify not just the major aspects of her life that deserved attention, but also what would be previously unrecognized or unexamined aspects of her story. I also included any details, trivial or not so trivial, that shed light on her life and experiences which would be of interest to any reader.

From this, I recognized the current need for a similar exploration of the lives of people of color in the history of anthropology, as noted to be lacking by Antón et al. (2018). I introduce several individuals and highlight their particular experiences related to race, their relationships with Trotter, and the racial "scientific" opinions of anthropologists at the time. I investigated how biases (particularly regarding race) found their way into anthropologists' research and careers, principally as demonstrated by Trotter as a representative anthropologist of the time. And she was in many ways representative of the general majority of opinions/actions, though certainly not of all anthropologists. The social biases of these scientists, including Trotter, cannot

be fully divorced from their impacts on scientific research, and the scientific research cannot be fully divorced from its impact on society.

I collected this data and wrote the book with the double purpose of expanding documentation on Trotter's life, and of introducing biological anthropologists (who do not always actively seek out historical context) to these discussions. I used Trotter as a means to examine some difficult or disregarded historical and modern topics. I even perhaps used her – a renowned but under-explored historical figure – as a lure to readers seemingly only interested in Trotter. Within this biography I was able to branch out to rely on analogous experiences of others to fill in the inevitable gaps in historical data specifically on one person. And this approach then allowed me to investigate topics (through Trotter) that are so relevant to modern practitioners, even though they are often ignored, assumed to be 'of the past', or are just out-of-reach for an anthropologist's existing reference toolkit.

Because this book was written by a practising forensic anthropologist, it might not look the same as one written by a strict historian of science. My background influences my perspective and may have introduced blind spots in this research. I am guilty of a common tack for scientists: of moving forward without first clearly unpacking (for myself and readers) the philosophical background, the biases, and the cultural assumptions that underlie the work I produced. I entered this project feeling perhaps uniquely qualified to examine Trotter and the historical context in which she worked, but this was certainly naïve. I did write this book first and foremost for biological anthropologists and, as such, I ask and answer the questions of a biological anthropologist. I often sought which lines of information to follow based on published questions from anthropological literature, and then used historical approaches to respond. But this may sometimes omit engagement with some historical or sociological questions to begin with.

The clearest example would be my omission of more contextual history for the Terry Collection, which I discuss in more detail in the Future Direction section. For another example, this perspective as an anthropologist led me to create a detailed chapter on the tibia, which is most certainly of interest only to anthropologists, and perhaps does not exactly move Trotter's story along. But I believe it did need to be addressed. For the examination of Trotter's tibia error, I used some of the same accusations and open questions left by Jantz et al. (1994 and 1995) as a framework. I could then incorporate the newly-found information from her archival materials to respond to these comments, which represent the most relevant modern questions to practising anthropologists. I think this provides a very specific instance highlighting not just scientific error in general, but also the pitfalls of racial biases in scientific work and the somewhat sexist responses of more modern anthropologists who have judged her mistake in gendered ways.

This perspective does, however, provide a useful vehicle to present my thesis and purpose to the people I hope it is most relevant to – practising anthropologists. Many do not actively seek out historical references, but their research and teaching can benefit from deeper context and perspectives outside of the discipline. A greater historical context for the development of their field can enrich an anthropologist's practice, their attitudes toward ongoing inequities, their pedagogy, and their too often casual handling of "race" and "sex" in active research. This is a field that deals "professionally" and "scientifically" with these concepts, and those concepts then necessarily diffuse socially into how they and others treat not just research subjects, but colleagues and all people.

For my main and intended audience, I hope to have provided clear-cut history of the experiences of women and people of color in anthropology at a specific time. Through historical context we can gain some distance and a different perspective on modern controversial topics. It

is then easier to extrapolate that context for topics in current anthropology which are otherwise uncomfortable to confront and have, unfortunately, been habitually disregarded.

5. PORTFOLIO REVIEW & ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

The nine chapters of the monograph and the incorporated journal article (chapters five and six) have a double purpose as part biography, part alternative disciplinary history. This book is the first to substantiate Trotter's influential role in early American physical anthropology, establish her legacy within the field, offer novel historical information about her career and life, assemble parallel stories of women and minority anthropologists contemporary with Trotter, situate those stories with each other and with modern experiences, and assess the influence those revealed biases related to sex and race have had on anthropological research.

The introduction (chapter one) summarizes the basis and purpose of the book. I establish Trotter's accomplishments and a basic narrative of her life and career, and the relative lack of available resources for information pertaining to Trotter.

Chapter two (Hawaii and the Army) explores perhaps the most well-remembered episode of Trotter's career, the one year that she spent in Hawaii serving as the anthropology expert for the Army identifying the remains of World War II losses. This chapter aims to introduce the character, expertise, and influence of Trotter, jumping into her story at a meaningful apogee instead of just at the birth of an infant, as many conventional biographies do. It expounds on her contributions to the US military's laboratory, including Trotter's own rationale for her actions. Overall, this chapter establishes Trotter's prominence and enduring legacy in anthropology.

Chapter three (The Tibia) provides a detailed history of a particular error in Trotter's stature estimation project which has received disproportionate attention from anthropologists since its discovery in the mid-1990s. Due to the continued, active use of her data and the unfixable nature of the tibia error, the thorough nature of this chapter makes it likely of greatest (or perhaps

singular) interest to practitioners actively dealing with her data. Much of the previous work on this topic has dealt with Trotter quite harshly, even suspecting her of corrupt intent. Most (e.g., Ubelaker 2000) have privileged the men around Trotter and claimed that she should have taken their advice, not knowing that documentation exists showing that these men too shared in the confusion over tibia measurements and provided Trotter with contradictory and even self-contradictory advice. Novel historical details in the book, including the contradictory advice she received from renowned contemporary male anthropologists, provide an alternative portrayal to what has previously appeared in the literature. Furthermore, anthropology's commitment to racial typographies contributed to the obfuscation of Trotter's tibia error for decades. This chapter complicates, expands, and humanizes Trotter's error.

Chapter four (Life and Career) consists of a more traditional biography of Trotter's life and career, with the particular inclusion of her own reflections and accounts wherever possible. Through extensive archival and never-before-published research, Trotter's early life, education, and the greater arc of her career are outlined, along with personal connections and her own impressions of her experiences. Key individuals are highlighted from professional relationships. The development, progression, and themes of her career are followed. I provide further details regarding Trotter's specific contributions to the Terry Collection of human skeletons.

Chapter five (Women in Early Physical Anthropology) introduces the fourteen women anthropologists who were also members of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists in its earliest years, providing biographical details and specifically highlighting their experiences as women. Presenting existing documentation of treatment based on gender for each of these early physical anthropologists, in some cases firsthand, provides the first indirect, and admittedly incomplete, retrospective survey, in the manner assessed by Turner et al. (2018).

This also involves a discussion of Trotter's own growing personal and professional interests in charting the history of women in her field, with the particular attention to her acknowledgment of the marginalized role of women.

Chapter six (Women's Experiences) identifies, in detail, the shared patterns of these fourteen (plus several more) women's experiences and treatment based on gender. This chapter borrows the data collection methods of Rossiter (1982) and pairs that with personal reflections and immediate parallels between otherwise seemingly varied experiences. Many of the details of these women's lives and experiences are taken directly from archival and obscure ephemeral sources, which are published here in a more accessible format. This chapter also addresses Trotter's personal friendships and social life, within the framework of professional women's constricted social options. This project further links, for the first time, these historical experiences to the sometimes depressingly similar, continued disparities and experiences of women within the fields of physical and forensic anthropology today.

Chapter seven (Marginalized Contemporaries), in some ways paired with chapters five and six, introduces one woman and several men who were people of color contemporary with Trotter, most of whom were anthropologists. By compiling details of these individuals' experiences and personal reflections, I identify commonalities with other individuals in this chapter, and further link these to the disparities shared with White women from chapter five. These experiences vary from those of the women discussed in the previous chapters, but similar limitations and biases reverberate. Trotter's professional relationships and engagement with many of these individuals are also addressed, including her documented biases against them.

Chapter eight (Race, Sex, and Research) draws on the personal and professional biases elucidated in chapters five through seven to explore how these same biases were embedded in

anthropological research and its real-world applications. I give special attention to Trotter's own work and the complicated, paradoxical ways that she and others handled these concepts in their research. Trotter and most of her contemporaries in physical anthropology were quite convinced of the inherence and meaningfulness of biological race and sex, despite some of their own data's objective resistance (when re-analyzed) to these categorizations. This mindset was unfortunately characteristic of the first decades of the field, though Trotter maintained this stance perhaps beyond its shelf life. I contextualize all of this research by looking at the effects of the applied scientific practices of Trotter on people's lives.

Chapter nine (Later Years) returns to a biographical accounting, in an extension of chapter four, of Trotter's professional and personal life during her time as professor emerita. It documents many of her accolades, global travel, and personal interests, while providing additional details that shed further light on her personality. One pre-publication reviewer noted that the manuscript read as "two conjoined books." I now regret not better reorganizing to respond to that valid concern. If I could re-visit the organization, I might not split apart the biographical chapters, but instead split the book into two parts: 1) Biography – consisting of chapters two through four, and nine; and 2) Alternative History – consisting of chapters five through eight. As it currently stands though, culminating with the details of Trotter's later life serves to reassert one of the primary purposes of this book as a biography of Trotter. Returning to this biographical content for the final chapter, following intervening chapters that expound on related topics, further weaves these blended stories into one integrated book.

6. CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT

The monograph has thus far received four book reviews in prominent journals relevant to the topic area: the *Journal of Forensic Sciences* (Pilloud 2022), *Forensic Anthropology* (De La Paz 2023), *Isis* (Domingues 2023), and *Forensic Science Review* (Sehrawat 2023). Each has provided a favorable summation, particularly of its readability and lauding the originality of this alternative and candid historical accounting of anthropology's sometimes problematic past surrounding issues of sexism and racism. One review has also provided specific and valid criticisms of portions of the book.

The reviewer for the *Journal of Forensic Sciences* indicates the need for greater historical perspective regarding a discussion of Trotter's personal life. Pilloud (2022) correctly notes that I do not properly address the historically precarious financial rights of women in reference to Trotter's housing choices. I only briefly proffer that finances played some role in her sharing an apartment with one woman for nearly 30 years (Wilson 2022, p. 134), and do not go into any further detail. However, Pilloud's supporting statements that women in the US could not open a bank account until the 1960s, or a credit account until 1974, are not exactly correct. In the 1960s discrimination against women in opening a bank account was made unlawful; and 1974 marks the year of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, which first made refusing a line of credit on the basis of, among other things, sex or marital status, unlawful. The distinction is that women could and did hold bank or credit accounts previously, but by the 1960s and 1974, respectively, these became protected rights for the first time (see Thurston 2018).

Addressing this financial context in which Trotter made decisions about her living situation is a historical deficiency in the monograph, due to my own omission and the lack of primary records on this topic. While I have not found any direct data on whether Trotter herself held a

bank or credit account, what I do now have to redress this is information from other contemporary women in St. Louis. One Black pediatrician who was also interviewed for an oral history at Washington University, Helen E. Nash (1999), recalled that she put her first one hundred dollars in a bank around 1950 to start her medical practice. In another oral history, medical librarian Estelle Brodman (1978) noted how low her bank account was while teaching in the mid-1950s, after receiving her PhD.

Reviewer Pilloud (2022, p. 2504) also states that "this may not be the venue to out someone, and there is the potential to deny Trotter's own identity that may not have fit into any of these categories." However, I fundamentally disagree that it is problematic in a biography to put forward, with corroborating information, even the possibility that a historical figure was not strictly heterosexual, cisgendered, or any other non-normative identity. And the reviewer is correct that the relationship, if any at all, may not have been easily or binarily defined. But she overlooks that I intentionally do not make definitive assertions in that regard, stating that I "cannot reliably speculate on the exact nature of Trotter's relationship" and that I do not know what "particular shape it took" (Wilson 2022, p. 134–5).

This topic does, of course, require a sensitivity, and this section may have made more sense in a different chapter, or with more clearly ambivalent or equivocal language. I did take seriously the decision of how exactly how to address Trotter's living situation with limited historical data. I ultimately decided to note the possibility that she may have had a close relationship of some sort with her apartment mate. I had hoped to provide context and caution in presenting the information, using this as a segue for adding a parallel discussion of the constrictions on professional women's personal lives and homophobia in society, the military, and academia. This reviewer's comments, though partly oversimplifying the text, show that in this overall

endeavor I may have failed through either verbiage or approach. But the general concern about its inclusion at all is perhaps rooted in a societal homophobia—which I do not intend to perpetuate—that makes indicating a same-sex relationship taboo, while indicating a different-sex relationship (whether accurate or not) acceptable. If these were similar details of a close personal relationship, in whatever form, with a man, it is very unlikely there would have been any comment on appropriateness.

7. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There are a few details which reviewers have not noted, but that I would like to address. One is that I could expand on the available source material. As a consequence of the pandemic and the timing of this book, I have not (yet) accessed the small amount of materials related to Trotter that are present within the archival collection of her attorney, Lucile W. Ring, at the St. Louis Mercantile Library of the University of Missouri – St. Louis. This collection would likely add valuable data related to her finances and financial institutions, and possibly her will. Prior to publication I also did not get to visit the archival collections at the Smithsonian related to her frequent correspondent, colleague T. Dale Stewart, which includes a small selection of letters with Trotter (although many or most of these are duplicates of those present in Trotter's archival collection). These were necessary but unfortunate omissions since I was not prepared to wait years to publish, but these sources may reveal additional topics or details of relevance to future work building on this project. Promisingly, Trotter's great-nephew has also recently alerted me to additional materials he discovered at his father's farmhouse, which had been recovered from Trotter's apartment after her terminal illness. I am currently helping him to secure a permanent home for these materials at Washington University with her existing archival collection.

And while this book comprehensively assesses the experiences of women, I did not, unfortunately, engage as fully with establishing the patterns of experiences for other minorities. Very recently, even since the publication of this book, physical anthropologists have published more investigations of the current experiences of people of color. New questions and perspectives have been brought up by papers such as Go et al. (2021) concerning the predominantly "WEIRD: Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic" perspectives that bias the majority of forensic anthropological research, and Thomas Wilson's (2023)

elucidation of his personal experiences in America as a Black primatologist. These concepts could be further assessed with regard to historical context and analogous personal experiences within historical anthropology, in the manner I undertook for women. Promisingly, the 2022 annual meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences included a symposium on *Pioneers of Color* (with a related article by Go et al. (2023)), and starting in 2023, a new grant award has been named in honor of Black anthropologist Caroline Bond Day.

On this same note of acknowledging the predominant perceptions that skew biological anthropology research to center on White people, I want to engage further with the contexts that brought human remains into the Terry Collection of human skeletons. This is the collection from which Trotter first learned human skeletal anatomy at the age of 21, that she then used for decades of research, that she and many others have regarded highly as a uniquely useful source for biological study, and that she herself curated for more than a decade. Her implicit engagement with the Collection's ethical issues and social conditions were embedded in her practice as an anthropologist. A deeper discussion of that context as it relates to Trotter and other anthropologists at the time is merited. And truly, the ongoing history of the Terry Collection is big enough to deserve several projects of its own.

The Terry Collection

The Robert J. Terry Anatomical Skeletal Collection has been described as "the most intensively studied research collection in the Smithsonian Institution" (National Museum of Natural History website, accessed 2020). It is comprised of the complete skeletons of more than 1,700 individuals with documented antemortem information. A quick google scholar search for

"Terry Anatomical Collection" returns about 54,200 results. The Collection has been fundamental to countless anthropologists and biologists in teaching, research, and the development of methods. It is perhaps impossible to be a practising biological anthropologist today without having some connection to the Terry Collection – if not physically through one's education and direct research, then certainly indirectly through using the vast scientific methods and published references developed from the Collection.

When Robert J. Terry started collecting skeletons in 1910, the only clear legal means to acquire human remains for medical study was by receiving unclaimed bodies under the 1887 Anatomical Law of Missouri. The effect of this was that the remains which arrived at the medical school for student dissection and the skeletal collection came mostly from individuals who died poor and/or institutionalized, and disproportionately represented individuals who were older, male, and Black (Hunt and Albanese 2005). Terry and his contemporaries (and, for decades after, most anthropologists) seem to have unquestioningly found this to be an ethically appropriate historical source for human remains, if only because it was the only large-scale manner of acquisition available to anatomists at the time. And while the Terry Collection is peerless in its size, quality, accessibility, and prominence, it was not unique in its origins. It was acquired following some of the same patterns as many others early in the establishment of physical anthropology and anatomy, which regarded amassing large, specimen-based collections for research and study as integral to their work (see Allen 1975).

Trotter inherited the Collection in 1941, after Terry's retirement. Over the next 16 years she expanded the Collection's size, replaced skeletons, and renamed it after Terry. In 1967 Trotter brokered the transfer of the Collection's permanent custody to the US National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution, to be permanently accessible to researchers.

When Trotter had first assumed the curation of the Collection, she determined that it required a more even distribution across ages of Black and White individuals, and male and female individuals (Trotter 1981). Trotter was eventually able to accomplish this by changing the method of acquisition from receiving unclaimed cadavers under that 1887 law to willed body donation in 1956, under the Missouri Uniform Anatomical Gift Act that she personally helped to enact. Her impetus to do so was seemingly to correct the insufficient numbers of cadavers available to her medical students and the imbalanced demographic makeup of the skeletal collection, and not at all due to concerns for the people whose remains were brought to the medical school without consent and without consideration for the exploitative circumstances that supported the process. Critically, the 1956 Act changed the method of acquisition to one of informed consent which continues in modified forms today. So, what Trotter (and others) actually accomplished was a more ethical method of cadaver acquisition, where individuals willed their remains to the medical school, even though her actual motivation had nothing to do with correcting historical inequities.

The ethics of human remains in museums and other institutions is not a new topic, but it has gained significant professional and public momentum in very recent years. Previous scholarship and action policies in the US (as well as federal and state funding for such activities) have often focused on considerations of the remains of American Indians and other native groups (for example, Marsh et al. 2020; Nash and Colwell 2020), and have only more recently broadened to address other marginalized groups, including Black populations and remains from other nations. Anthropologists are beginning to recognize the value of not just acknowledging at a surface level, but also actively investigating how the racist, classist, and complicated histories of anthropology and society in general have shaped the discipline and its scientific relics. In the

case of the Terry Collection, the past is not over and done; it survives in the still extensively used skeletons and related research.

The general circumstances of historical skeletal collecting have been covered in books such as *The Skull Collector*s (Fabian 2010), *Bone Rooms* (Redman 2016), and in an article on the Terry Collection specifically (Hunt and Albanese 2005). De la Cova (2019) explores the history of the Terry Collection with reference to general sociocultural contexts in the US and a call to restore the identities of the anonymized remains. And other recent scholarship seeks to address previously ignored issues of how racism has shaped not just the conceptual heritage of anthropology, but also its very real skeletal collections. For example, Williams and Ross (2022) further examine the relevance of the Black Lives Matter movement for museums and anatomical collections, with considerations for modern ethical practice using historical collections.

An article in the journal *Communications Biology* from 2022, like thousands before it, uses the Terry Collection to test a technique on a skeleton (Austin et al. 2022). Unlike nearly every other *scientific* article whose methods have relied on the Collection, this one also pivots to trace the human source of that skeleton and the context that led his and others' anonymized remains to Washington University. This article does not just question (as many have) the suitability of using a very specific collection that consists of individuals who died in St. Louis with birth dates ranging from 1828 to 1943 in order to extrapolate information for modern and varied groups of people. It questions the uncritical, continued use of a collection that is predominantly comprised of the remains of unclaimed, mostly indigent, individuals without their consent and stripped of their identities.

Also in 2022, the Smithsonian Institution came out with its new Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns Policy. This policy appears to expand the concepts of ethical custody and

repatriation that were established from the National Museum of the American Indian Act of 1989 (which at all other US institutions is covered under the better-known 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)) and apply them to *all* human remains in the Institution's custody. These Acts gave museums the responsibilities of identifying relevant descendent people or communities and returning human remains that were historically collected unethically (if not illegally) and without regard to informed consent. At the present time, physical and digital access to all human remains in the Smithsonian's collections is restricted. This includes the Terry Collection. A related investigative series appeared in *The Washington Post* in 2023 drawing attention to the problematic historical collection and insufficient recent action to repatriate the vast amount of human remains at the Smithsonian (Dungca et al. August 15, 2023). The Curator of Biological Anthropology, Sabrina Sholts (2024), has recently published an assessment of the Museum's holdings and its future plans for the Terry Collection, which focuses more on the recent "ethical awakening" in anthropology to the issues of bodies of Black individuals in museums.

I have previously published on ethical, social, historical, and curatorial considerations for the remains of human fetuses and juveniles in museums (Wilson 2014, Wilson 2015), but in the book I only briefly address the pre-Trotter historical information on the origins of the Terry Collection and obliquely reference the disproportionate number of Black men available for the medical school's dissection. I focus instead on documenting Trotter's specific efforts to shift the state of Missouri to willed body donation and to secure the Collection's permanent home at the Smithsonian in 1967. While the ethics and history of human remains in museums are topics of interest to me and of relevance to the anthropological community, I did not fully explore their relevance to Trotter's own story. The Collection, including the context which allowed for its

original acquisition by Terry, was foundational to her perspectives on research, skeletons, biological race and sex, and her professional ethics and norms. This particular collection was also foundational to my own perspectives and those of so many anthropologists. I do not wish to leave those perspectives unexplored.

Moving forward, I would like to investigate the Terry Collection in the manner that I researched a small collection of human fetal and child skeletons at the National Museum of Health and Medicine in the journal *Museum Anthropology* (Wilson 2015). I assessed the historical context which gave the Museum access to these remains, including juvenile mortality rates and city demographics, legal and popular attitudes toward these living and deceased individuals, and the specific academic desires and attitudes of the Museum collectors. I briefly discussed the close association between poverty and medical dissection, which is entangled with the association between dissection and people of color, with the pragmatically conflicting bias toward White males as the anatomical standard. I also engaged with the modern interests and concerns of museum visitors regarding the presence of juvenile human remains on exhibit.

Expanding on the methods I used for my 2015 article, I could elucidate the structural contexts that led the remains of certain people and not others into the Collection. This involves understanding relevant demographic and historical data about St. Louis as a whole, the conditions at the institutional sources of the remains, and how the professional agendas of the collectors (Terry and Trotter) and the biased aims of early physical anthropology shaped the contents of the Collection. In the absence of actual data, we have only assumptions, unexamined biases, suspicions, and the status quo. A more rigorous understanding of anthropology's past, particularly for its collections comprised of human remains, can inform ethical stewardship, encourage public trust, and even improve scientific accuracy and the legitimacy of the field of

biological anthropology as it stands today. Deeper research into the Terry Collection's origins can further help to recognize the personhood of these individuals along with their nonconsensual contributions to the field, and continue to deconstruct the myth of scientific neutrality.

8. CONCLUSION

This biography serves to follow not just the life and career of one woman, but also those of many other people, like and unlike her, and the larger discipline of physical anthropology, over the course of decades. I explore the complexity and diversity of Trotter's experiences and professional choices, alongside those of other people in her orbit. Stories like these, which have so often been overlooked, provide the data and the perspectives that have been routinely ignored in how we understand our history and present.

The monograph, including the revised and expanded journal article, establishes Mildred Trotter's place as a foundational figure in American physical and forensic anthropology. It provides novel biographical details of her life, her character, and her career, including her widely regarded service for the US military identifying the remains of war losses, the resulting stature estimation formulas, her landmark work on hair growth and life cycles, her contributions to the composition and preservation of the extensively accessed Terry Collection of human skeletons, and her decades as (often) the first medical professor (man or woman) for more than 4,000 students at the Washington University medical programs. A sufficient biography of Trotter must also address an infamous (to anthropologists) error made in her landmark stature estimation research. The book humanizes and complicates the previously somewhat ungenerous narrative behind that mistake, and contextualizes it within the documented pervasiveness of scientific error.

The work addresses multiple concepts in tandem, situating a historical figure in physical anthropology alongside individuals comparable to her in various ways, and explores their lives and careers within the discipline's historical conduct regarding race and sex. Starting from the perspective of Trotter as a woman in a male-dominated field, I explore the varied yet patterned

experiences of other women in the early years of the discipline. Branching out to others who were not only underrepresented in numbers at that time, but also in modern discussions of the history of physical anthropology, I investigate the early experiences of people of color. I then explore how these sex and race biases infiltrated scientific research and its real-world applications.

Women were uncommon to the point of rarity in physical anthropology when Trotter was first active. Though they now (and for decades) represent a high majority, they remain relatively underrecognized and underrepresented at higher levels. And while people of color were an even scarcer rarity, unfortunately the long historical problems of racism in anthropology have contributed to the ongoing inequity and lack of diversity in today's field. Historical perspectives on these disparities and their foundations have only very recently found traction and interest in biological and forensic anthropology, as the evidence of these same continued inequalities have become more readily apparent to the incoming younger, more diverse members of this field. An exploration of how to fix modern problems surrounding these issues must reckon with anthropology's notoriously troubled past in these same aspects. As reviewer Pilloud (2022) wrote: "Many of the [historical] themes in this book will feel all too familiar to many readers. Radical change is needed…. While the state of the discipline today is deeply troubling, books such as this by Wilson that do not shy away from our problematic past are an indication that change is coming, but it definitely will not be easy."

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