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Skeletons in the Closet:
The History and Ethics of Human Skeletal Collections in the United States with an Example from the Vassar College Collection

*A thesis submitted for the partial fulfillment of the degree
Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology at Vassar College*

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Introduction

Researchers and collectors use human remains for both educational and aesthetic purposes. Historically, bodies taken for use in medical schools, research studies, museums, and personal collections are often taken without permission of the deceased or next of kin. This approach to body harvesting has been linked to the rise of the physician and clinic in the 18th century. Michel Foucault describes the “medical gaze” as this new power physicians began exhorting over the human body (Foucault 2012). Physicians were given rights over the physical bodies of others, creating a disconnection between a person and their body by encouraging the individuals to seek doctor expertise to understand and maintain themselves. To fulfill this role, doctors needed to study the human body in detail, driving a new market for dissection cadavers.

Non-medical study of human corpses has been recently described as “post-mortem gaze,” by Patterson (2014). Naturalists, archaeologists, and other scientists began collections of human remains to support their own research. Lifeless bodies are more easily manipulated than living ones and therefore can be unnecessarily turned into a spectacle. These bodies were often taken from those who are most powerless in life; in America this included the poor, and African-Americans and Native Americans again without permission from individuals and descendent groups (Ferris 2003, Halperin 2007, Humphrey 1973). A major difference between medical and non-medical collections is that non-medical ones tended to collect and retain as many specimens as possible while medical collections retained small numbers of example specimens. Such post-mortem practices began in the 19th century and continued, without much resistance, until the end of the 20th century.

Change came in the 1980s, when Native Americans pressured museums and anthropologists (both physical anthropologists and archaeologists) to begin repatriating human

remains and sacred objects to their nation of origin (Midler 2011, Watkins 2004). Laws that govern the collection and repatriation of Native American remains, specifically the National Museum of the American Indian Act (NMAI), and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) were passed as a result of such resistance movements. Both laws have their challenges and limitations, but before their passage Native remains were only seen by many anthropologists as objects to be studied. Descendant groups argued that their ancestors should not be exposed to such analyses and that physical anthropologists do not have the right to study these remains (Turner 2005:111). Repatriation legislation instigated dialogue between these groups and within the larger anthropological profession. Repatriation legislation also forced a review of the ethics of collecting and handling human remains. Indigenous archaeology is another way that descendent groups have had a role in how remains are treated.

Anthropologists study humans, and this regularly entails collaboration with those they study. This interaction requires respect for a diversity of individuals, cultures, societies, and knowledge systems. In addition to legislation regarding the treatment of remains, such ethos are codified in the professional standards of various anthropological professional organizations, such as the American Anthropological Association and the Society for American Archaeology. However, there is not a single, coherent policy regarding the ethics of anthropological skeletal collections. What is considered ethical depends on who is asked: direct descendants, larger descendant communities, museum anthropologists, physical anthropologists, or archaeologists. Clearer collection guidelines are still needed to ensure that bodies within existing collections are being handled in a manner that anthropologists and descendants would consider ethical.

This thesis investigates a portion of the Vassar College human remains teaching collection to evaluate how ethical our practices may be. Included is an assessment of the potential sources of some of the human skulls in our collection that are not normally used for teaching purposes. One skull was recently acquired by the Anthropology department, where the majority of Vassar's human remains are housed. This skull had previously been in possession by the Earth Science department. The other skull was recently removed from the teaching collection because its coloration suggests that it came from a burial context rather than an authorized biological supply company. These examples reflect the need to treat each case individually, and emphasize that there is no one right way to respectfully collect and curate human remains.

The Gaze

Foucault and the Medical Gaze

In 1963 the French philosopher Michel Foucault wrote *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. In it, Foucault describes the shift towards scientific knowledge in the 18th century, and how modernity has caused doctors to be seen as almost divine and having power over men's souls (Foucault 2012:31). All-knowing doctors were given freedom to do as they wish or deemed necessary to ensure society's good state of health. The "medical gaze" resulted as the relationship between doctor and patient caused a separation between the patient's body and their personal identity; the individual's body was now an object to be manipulated in search of medical truth for all. Clinics were established to allow for constant observation of patients who had traded in personal clothing for standardized hospital gowns. Through such observation, doctors developed the ability to describe symptoms in a way that was more applicable to all patients.

The “medical gaze” also gave physicians power to touch and carefully inspect a patient’s body: feel the heartbeat, examine the fluids, and generally inspect the naked body. Doctors were encouraged to look past any distractions and only focus on the things that could be seen and explained by an authority outside the body. Their interview questions became more quantitatively diagnostic as they shifted from “What’s the matter with you?” to “Where does it hurt?” The physical manifestation of the illness was the subject, rather than its effects on an individual person (Foucault 2012:xviii). The practice of nosology, classification of diseases based off the symptoms they present, ensured that doctors were practitioners of science.

As scientists, doctors were encouraged to study corpses to better understand the final effects of disease. Doctors now gazed beneath the surface by cutting open the body. Foucault describes this focus on pathological anatomy as the “anatomy-clinical perception” (Foucault 2012:134-138). Death was seen as the result of the body’s failure, or degeneration from its susceptibility to disease. The best way to prevent or delay death was to gain an internal understanding of diseased bodies through autopsies and cadaver dissection. Medical schools suddenly needed large quantities of human bodies to train students and advance medical knowledge (Sappol 2002:58).

Dissection soon became an art: skilled physicians created public displays for their cadavers, and anatomical theaters allowed the public to gaze upon dissections. In the 1760s, the first American anatomical theater was visited by medical students and the general public who bought tickets. Spectators watched with a combination of disgust and curiosity as the bodies of criminals, prostitutes, beggars, African Americans, and Native Americans were dissected (Sappol 2002:91). For those who were unable to attend, pictures and descriptions of the

dissection might be published in the newspaper. After the dissection, doctors sometimes retained specimens for their personal collection or for public exhibition.

Society allowed for corpses to be taken and used by doctors because, “The corpse was part of the medical field, and this was unchallenged by religion and morality” (Foucault 2012:126). Body snatchers often supplied doctors with bodies, but it was acceptable as long as bodies were used for the benefit of science. Dead bodies now had a purpose, and that purpose was given priority over social mores that were against the study of remains. Whose responsibility is it to draw the line between what beneficial and disrespectful treatment? When dealing with human bodies, scientific inquiry often overshadows social ethics.

Patterson and The Post-Mortem Gaze

Public dissection opened the door to the “post-mortem gaze,” or the nonmedical ways of looking at the lifeless body or its parts (Patterson 2013). The “medical gaze” is more associated with respect and solemnity while the “post-mortem gaze” is associated with more disrespectful treatment. While doctors used public dissections as opportunities to show off their skill and proudly represent the field of medicine, the public saw them as social events with the lifeless body as the main form of entertainment. The “post-mortem gaze” accounts for both the desire and the repulsion involved when viewing dead bodies in this nonmedical setting. There is a pleasure in looking at what can be considered the ultimate taboo- a dead body. The setting and context of the body especially change the public’s attitudes towards death. The physical space changes how the public “reads” the corpse, and affects the purpose of the body (Patterson 2013:83). For example, a body in a hospital will be looked at more seriously and respectfully than one in a museum. The relocation of corpses and skeletons out of hospitals and into these

anatomy theaters, and eventually museums and collections, created new spaces for them to be viewed and interpreted by society.

The “post-mortem gaze” also considers why certain bodies are more likely to become spectacle. Factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, or criminality can influence how a person’s body is treated after death, with some groups more likely to have their bodies used for both research and entertainment. Power, particularly socioeconomic, is one thing that dictates how certain groups are exploited to fulfill desires for entertainment. While the context of the body plays a huge role in how it is interpreted, the consciousness of the viewer also influences their gaze. The history of colonialism and racism in the United States is an especially powerful influence on the “post-mortem gaze”. It accounts for the unequal exploitation of bodies that has occurred in the past and the present. As we will see, however, the communities of the deceased are not just victims of the gaze,

The public display of dissections is a thing of the past, there are many modern ways that the post-mortem gaze is still seen. There are numerous museums that boast their collections of human skeletons, such as *Bodies: The Exhibition* in New York City, and the Mütter Museum in Philadelphia. Although the bodies for these exhibits have been donated, it still shows that bodies continue to be used for entertainment purposes, under the guise of education. Images of death are ubiquitous in today’s society, and bodies are not always taken seriously or treated respectfully. Skeletons especially are commonplace, with imagery on clothing, in television, and as decoration. While not as disrespectful as gazing upon a real corpse or skeleton, it still reflects how bodies are seen and treated today.

The History of Scientific Racism and Skeletal Collections

The post-mortem gaze manifests itself in extreme ways within museums and teaching collections. Such large collections allowed naturalists, and other scientists interested in studying the bodies of animals and humans, to organize and classify the variety of life forms as each new species was discovered. Such classification fueled scientific racism, the idea that some humans are more animal-like than others. Linnaeus's *Systema Natura* (1735) was one of the first books published that included classifications of human races. In his tenth edition he had expanded these to include 4 main divisions (Native American, European, Asian, and African) and two suspect (wild men and “monsters”) (Linnaeus 1758). Johann F. Blumenbach formalized three distinct races in his *On the Natural History of Mankind* (1775), which would become the basis for future researchers. These were white Caucasians, Asian Mongolians, and black Africans (Thomas 2001:37).

After examining a sample of skulls, Blumenbach also concluded that Caucasian skeletal anatomy was the most perfect and therefore they represented the "original man." Both other races had inferior skulls that reflected the degeneration of their people. The differences in their degeneration were due to differing environments between Africa and Asia. In contrast, Linnaeus assessed the totality of each race's physical attributes, personality, politics, and ethics in order to determine that white Caucasians were superior to Asians, Africans, and even Native Americans (Thomas 2001:37). Of course, both Blumenbach and Linnaeus were Caucasian. Although clearly flawed, the race system of human classification persists and is used by scientists and the general public when they wish to discuss the ancestry of populations. Popular racism has certainly fueled scientific racism when it comes to whose remains can and should be collected for study.

Samuel Morton, the father of modern physical anthropology, was one of the first to base an assessment of human variation on a substantial collection of human skeletons (Fabian 2010:19). Morton believed that the intelligence, and therefore superiority, of a race could be determined by measuring cranial capacity. All he needed to prove this hypothesis was a suitable collection of skulls. In 1830 he wrote, “Forcibly impressed with the great deficiency in a most important branch of science, I at once resolved to make a collection for myself” (Thomas 2001:39). Morton and his contemporaries added to the growing demand for human remains.

Physicians were already turning to professional grave robbers to add to the bodies of executed criminals they could receive legally. In 1854, body snatchers in and around New York City stole bodies from approximately 700 graves (Humphrey 1973:821). Doctors usually requested Euroamerican bodies but it was often less risky to dig up the graves of African-Americans and Native Americans because these groups had the least power to fight back (Humphrey 1973:820, Thomas 2001:39). For the same reason, bodies of the poor were harvested from poor houses at such a rate that many believed it was a legal practice (Humphrey 1973:823). In 1882, a reporter caught two grave robbers at work in the Lebanon Cemetery in Philadelphia, the local burial ground for African-Americans. They admitted their wagon full of recently uncovered bodies was to go to the Jefferson Medical College for payment. The doctor in charge was arrested but he was acquitted of all charges (Halperin 2007:490).

Samuel Morton received his first samples from grave robbers but later used his connections at the Philadelphia Academy of Science and American Philosophical Society to amass a large collection. Some skulls came from archaeological excavations. By 1849 he had 867 human skulls in his collection, representing every continent (Fabian 2010:15). Morton used this collection to establish the science of craniometry (the study of skull size and shape) and to

“prove” that Caucasians were indeed the superior race. Morton’s attitudes about race were not well received, but his collection grew through donations even after his death.

The late 19th century was a boom-time for museums. New museums were established and existing ones moved to create their own natural history, ethnology, and archaeology collections. Places such as the Smithsonian Institution, The Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale, and the American Museum of Natural History started buying up private collections. The United States government even joined in the collecting craze when the Army Surgeon General created the Army Medical Museum. This anatomical collection combined the medical and post-mortem gaze by crafting a museum collection of human remains explicitly for the purpose of teaching surgeons and doctors.

The Civil War battlefield provided a unique collecting opportunity and a wealth of human remains. The Surgeon General gave the order to collect from battlefields to fill the museum. Also collected were “other matters as may prove of interest in the study of military medicine or surgery” (Fabian 2010:168), such as battle wounds and traumas. These specimens could be used to teach battlefield surgery and to satisfy public curiosity: science and spectacle. The military context also allowed for some bodies to be associated with individual identities. Each “donor” was carefully labeled, and their names were published for all to see. By the time the Civil War ended, the Army Medical Museum contained almost 250,000 specimens (Fabian 2010:171-175).

After the war, the Medical Museum began creating its ethnological collection, and called specifically for collections of Native American bodies. Among the first specimens were the 1864 victims of the Sand Creek Massacre. Over one hundred Cheyenne villagers had been killed by a group of Colorado settlers, and the bodies were later collected and sent to the museum for study

(Thomas 2001:53). In 1868, the U.S. Surgeon General William A. Hammond encouraged military medical staff to collect and contribute human remains, especially adult skulls from which measurements could be taken to understand racial difference (Fabian 2010:186). The museum continued to grow through specimens taken from battlegrounds, reservation cemeteries, and burial mounds. Each acquired skull was labeled with tribe and specimen number rather than by the person's name as the Civil War "donors" had been. Native American remains were treated no different than hunting trophies or animal specimens, and were labeled with the name of the person who procured the skull (Thomas 2001:57). The Medical Museum also began paying anyone who could supply them with Native American remains. A typical skull would sell for between three and five dollars, while an entire body would go for more. A post- surgeon in North Dakota dug up the grave of a Yankton Sioux woman, and sent her head to the museum stating she was "a fine specimen" (Thomas 2001:57).

The Native American specimens were then analyzed to assess their racial inferiority. One curator, Lieutenant Colonel George A. Otis, measured more than eight hundred skulls at the museum and concluded that "American Indians must be assigned a lower position on the human scale than has been believed heretofore" (Thomas 2001:58). This shift in the museum's mission (from battlefield wounds to statistical analyses and anthropometrics) suggests that the curators were more interested in expanding their museum than teaching medical skills. During peacetime, army doctors no longer had to scramble around and save the lives of wounded warriors. Instead they could devote their time to exploring the far corners of the Earth by collecting the skulls of foreign and exotic people.

Ethics in Physical Anthropology

Skeletal Collections in Anthropology and Archaeology

Thomas Jefferson, considered the “Father of American Archaeology,” was one of the first to establish the need for archaeological collections. He collected skeletons from burial mounds because he wanted to understand how and why the burial mounds were created. Jefferson describes his methods and conclusions in *Notes on the State of Virginia in 1785*. Before Jefferson, the study of the past mainly limited to what scholars could learn through historical or firsthand accounts, “armchair anthropology” (Thomas 2001: 34). Instead, Jefferson looked for physical evidence to answer a scientific question, and in doing so he elevated archaeology's unique perspective on the study of past humans.

Physical anthropologists, following Samuel Morton, continued to develop their perspective on humans through the study of living and dead bodies and by cataloging the biological variation of humans and nonhuman primates. The fields of physical anthropology and archaeology often intersect because archaeological sites are a main source of human skeletons for physical anthropology research. Those who primarily study such remains are called bioarchaeologists. Archaeologists, physical anthropologists, and bioarchaeologists must receive training in the ethics of working with human remains because all three forms of anthropology are based on Western ideals and knowledge, and those outside the group being studied are typically the ones conducting the research (Atalay 206:280-282). Only recently have Native Americans and African-Americans been given a voice in how the remains of their ancestors have been treated.

Legally, American archaeologists have been in control of the underground historic record on public lands since the 1906 passing of the American Antiquities Preservation Act (AAPA). This act stated that archaeological excavations could only be done by trained professionals, and required qualified people to have permits to dig (Ferris 2003:158). In essence, this act asserted

that archaeologists had the privilege to dig up the past to advance scientific knowledge, and that other groups were excluded from this right. The AAPA was replaced in 1979 with the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA), but the principle was the same: archeologists have sole power to protect and gain information from the archaeological record on public lands (Ferris 2003:159). Rules regarding private lands vary by state, county, and sometimes by city. These acts ignore any role that descendants may play in the excavation.

Such laws were not created with bad intentions: archaeologists usually want to protect the cultural heritage of all peoples and preserve remnants of the past. However, the outcome matters more than the intentions. Excluding certain groups from having a role in archaeological excavation emphasizes the authority of archaeologists, whether it be in the decision making process, the physical digging, or the discussions and research. This exclusion also ignores the relationship of living descendent groups to the site and the cultural material, and disconnects people of the past and the present. Skeletons typically end up in laboratories for research and curation, but sometimes they are sent to museums for exhibits. Such behavior is reminiscent of Samuel Morton's collection or the Army Medical Museum's skeletal collections. Although archaeologists legally collect and present human remains under an educational mission, the "post-mortem gaze" explains why viewers see them as spectacle.

The Passing of NAGPRA

Native Americans do care about the excavation, collection, and display of their cultures and ancestors. Vine Deloria Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) discusses the anger felt by Native Americans towards anthropologists in his book *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969). He accuses anthropologists of exploiting Native people and questions their intentions and scientific objectivity (Deloria 1969). His book and activism brought national attention to Native American

issues in the United States. Suzan Shown Harjo (Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee) is another influential advocate for Native American Rights. She has been an activist since the mid-1960s for issues such as religious freedom, Native land rights, and repatriation.

One archaeological excavation in particular pushed Native American leaders to take action. In 1971, a crew uncovered human remains while constructing a road in Iowa. The remains of 26 white individuals were quickly reburied, while the remains of a Native American woman and her child were sent to a laboratory for study. Maria Pearson (Yanktaw Dakota) confronted the state governor about how the site was handled, and that the Native remains were treated differently than the white ones. In 1976, her efforts led to the passing of the Iowa Burials Protection Act, which was the first law that specifically protected Native American remains. In 1971, archaeologists excavating in Welch, Minnesota were confronted by a new group called the American Indian Movement (AIM). Protesters backfilled trenches and stole equipment and field notes, but also offering to pay for the damage done. This is only one of many protests that encouraged new legislation and ethics regarding how Native American sites are treated (Atalay 2006:287-289).

Maria Pearson, Suzan Harjo, and others helped to craft and pass the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990. NAGPRA applies to all museums and Federal agencies that receive federal funding, with the exception of the Smithsonian Institution, which operates under the National Museum of the American Indian Act (NMAI) passed in 1989. The term museum is used loosely, and applies to both state and local governments, and colleges and universities that have received federal funding. NAGPRA requires these museums to inventory all Native American human remains, sacred objects, funerary objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. The cultural affiliation of these individuals

and objects is then to be established through consultation with lineal descendants, tribes, and native organizations. Notice that individuals and objects are available for repatriation must also be published in the Federal Register (United States- National NAGPRA). This gives a variety of Native descendent groups the opportunity to claim culturally affiliated materials.

The dialogue between descendent groups and archaeologists/bioarchaeologists encouraged by NAGPRA is still finding its place within the larger research structure and dissemination of results. A sense of mistrust remains, largely due to the histories of unethical collections, such as the removal of recently deceased Native bodies from battlefields and the vigorous excavation of sacred burial grounds. As Vine Deloria Jr. stated in 1969, many Native Americans still believe that anthropologists are interested in furthering their own careers, not benefiting those they study. Laws, like NAGPRA, and professional codes of ethics, like those for the Society for American Archaeology, are helping to structure anthropological research in a way that ensures work with and for descendant communities.

Working With NAGPRA: Issues and Limitations

An ongoing conflict in archaeology is how to find the proper balance between the wishes of the scientific community and those of descendant groups. Often these wishes are contradictory: archaeologists want access to the information that bones provide while descendants want human remains to be seen as people, not data. The objectification of human remains and spiritual objects is a problem, and laws don't equate to culturally sensitive ethics. While NAGPRA was created to stop the objectification of Native American remains, a loophole enabled claims for exceptions to the law. If the museum deemed a study necessary to determine cultural affiliation, or if the outcome of a study would be a "major benefit to the United States" then it was allowed to remain within the museum (Watkins 2004:66).

Cultural affiliation is a crucial aspect of NAGPRA, not only for the remains and material that needs to be repatriated, but also for the groups making claims. A group must be federally recognized to make any claims, which can cause issues if they are not. Many tribes believe that groups that are not federally recognized are no less Indian than those that are (Watkins 2004:69). Although new rules regarding culturally unaffiliated remains have been created, the process is still difficult. Does the absence of cultural affiliation diminish the need for reburial? If this is true, it would reinforce the idea that Native American and white graves should be treated differently. While there are some cases where Euroamerican remains are kept for research, their remains are not typically treated as objects of study. For many Native Americans, cultural affiliation is evident and supported by oral history. For archaeologists, however, affiliation requires investigation and facts (Ferris 2003:163). The NMAI Act, which applies only to the Smithsonian, does not describe what to do in situations where cultural affiliation cannot be determined. NAGPRA does have provisions for cases where cultural affiliation cannot be determined and for inadvertent discovery (Midler 2011).

There are also limitations to the reach of the law. NAGPRA does not apply to private lands, which account for roughly half of all archaeological sites (Watkins 2004:67). NAGPRA does apply to any material from private lands that are donated to or purchased by a federally owned institution. Such ideas of personal/private property and ownership follow American culture but run contrary to the Native American cultures whose sites and remains archaeologists study. The fact that human remains discovered on private land can be seen as objects owned by the current landowner shows the limitations of repatriation.

Not only are there ambiguities and limitations to the law, but there are many issues related to complying with and enforcing NAGPRA. Determination of cultural affiliation can be slow and

difficult, and there are limited resources to assist the tribes and museums in compliance. In 2011, a compliance report has found that the Smithsonian has only offered one-third of its collection for repatriation (Wright 2012). Other federal agencies have repatriated 55 percent of their human remains, and 68 percent of the funerary items. The U.S. Government Accountability Office has found that many federal agencies have not complied with NAGPRA (Mittal 2010, Wright 2012).

Indigenous Archaeology

Despite the limitations of NAGPRA, it has been credited with opening up archaeology to include descendent groups in the process (Atalay 2006). The inclusion of descendent groups into research has also been a crucial step in balancing the goals of researchers and Native Americans. Indigenous archaeology is a growing field, where Native Americans or other descendent groups participate in excavations and studies relating to their ancestry. Indigenous archaeology gives these groups power over their own past, including how human remains are handled, curated, stored, and analyzed. While past research was done through the Western lens, indigenous archaeology allows for more insight into the group being studied. A growing number of Native Americans have received formal training and degrees in archaeology (Atalay 2006:290).

Other descendent groups are joining in the indigenous archaeology movement. Just as looters and naturalists have targeted Native Americans, African Americans, and the poor for grave robbing, archaeologists have been interested in learning more about the skeletons of all these minority groups. While Native Americans have been able to publicly push for legislation regarding ethical treatment, they are not the only groups fighting for their rights. In May of 1991, construction of a new office tower began in New York City. Despite warnings from archaeologists and historians that an African Burial Ground had been located at the sight, the

company continued digging. Within a year, around 420 skeletons had been removed from the site and were sent for study.

After an initial press release, the African-American community expressed their outrage and concern over the handling of the burial ground. They were not given a voice in how the site and the remains should be handled, and most were not even aware that the construction was occurring. Their request to have African-American anthropologists involved was initially dismissed. After months of protests and arguments, Public Law 102-393 was signed in October 1992 that halted all further construction of the site and gave \$3 million to construct a museum about the burial ground and the African-Americans in New York City. The skeletons were also moved to Howard University for study by black scientists and students. After analysis, the remains were reinterred at the burial ground. This site and the media coverage it received raised awareness about African-American archaeology, and how cases are being handled (Luo 2003). Descendants were united under a single cause, and were able to come together and successfully protest the excavation of the burial ground. One of the few African-American physical anthropologists in the United States, Michael Blakey, has brought together people from both the U.S. and Africa to research the people and the grounds. African-American scholars and descendants who have been historically underrepresented in archaeology were successfully incorporated into the research of the African Burial Ground. Future cases like this can learn from this outcome, but instead have descendant groups involved from the beginning.

Indigenous archaeology begins when archaeological excavation begins. Descendent groups should have a voice in the decision making process from the beginning. To do otherwise fosters mistrust between the public and archaeologists who study their ancestors. African-Americans, like Native Americans, have fought against a history of repression and inferiority

and now seek more control over sacred burial places. A law similar to NAGPRA for African-American graves might be necessary to protect the burials and remains of other groups that have been historically mistreated.

Professional Anthropology/Archaeology and Codes of Ethics

Aside from the laws in place regarding the treatment of remains, physical anthropologists and archaeologists have developed their own codes promoting human equality and human rights relating to the treatment of skeletal remains through professional organizations. The three basic rules include: 1) Human remains should be treated with dignity and respect, 2) Descendants should have the authority in the disposition of the remains of their relatives, and 3) The preservation of archaeological collections of human remains is an ethical imperative, owing to their importance for understanding the history of our species (Turner 2005:114). Such rules show that the field of physical anthropology is distancing itself from questions about collecting the past, while advocating that skeletons do hold information that is vital for the common goal of understanding the human species. Professional codes cannot ensure that skeletons are not mistreated, but can encourage that they are treated as the remnants of deceased humans.

Published policies vary by organization, but many contain other similar ideas. For example, the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) recognizes the need to balance scientific research and cultural beliefs. They do state that human remains must always be treated with respect, no matter the circumstances, and that “Commercial exploitation of ancient human remains is abhorrent” (SAA 1999). However, the SAA opposes any law that creates a uniform standard for the treatment of bodies, and instead acknowledges that context determines the scientific importance. They contend that human remains have been and will continue to be a crucial resource for anthropological understanding, and want to make sure that none of this

important material is lost because of reburial. While archaeologists often meet to discuss ethics and their work, this policy has not been amended in over a decade.

The American Association of Physical Anthropology (AAPA) and American Anthropological Association (AAA) have created more recent policies. The policy created by the AAPA in 2003 dictates that the peoples being researched should be given top priority no matter the situation. It states, “Anthropological researchers must do everything in their power to ensure that their research does not harm the safety, dignity, or privacy of the people with whom they work, conduct research, or perform other professional activities” (AAPA 2003). In this case, informed consent plays an important part in research, especially when studying human remains. Similarly, the AAA’s 2012 statement of ethics discusses the tools and skills that anthropologists need to learn in order to properly make ethical decisions (AAA Ethics Blog 2012). One section of their blog on ethics is titled, “Weight Competing Ethical Obligations Due Collaborators and Affected Parties.” This section briefly discusses the role of power in relationships, and how disproportionate power changes the ethical frameworks in place (AAA Ethics Blog 2012). The SAA should be updating their ethical codes to match the legal and political changes that have occurred. Professional societies contain the present leaders in anthropology, and they need to set the example for future generations.

The SAA code will have to acknowledge that archaeologists have both an obligation to science and an obligation to the public, and these interests must be carefully balanced. Questions arise when the descendants, or possible descendants, of remains come forth and oppose study of the body. While these remains have the potential to provide important information that may affect humankind, the research may go against the wishes of those whom it may most greatly affect. In this instance, ethical treatment can mean different things. For the researchers, ethical

treatment means treating the remains with respect but continuing research to benefit living humans. For some descendants, ethical treatment is entirely different, and they can instead believe that respecting the dead means immediate reburial. Certain groups can feel disrespected or powerless when discussions about treatment arise. Therefore, codes of ethics published by the SAA and the AAPA seem contradictory or not declarative enough, and can contribute to anger and mistrust. For example, while some codes say that archaeologists need to meet with the descendants, there is no clear timeline of when this is to occur. There is also no guidance for what is to be done when the descendent groups are opposed to study of the remains. There is much left to interpretation, and while context is key in most situations, most anthropological associations have not made a clear stance on placing the wishes of the descendant groups at the top of the priority list.

The Vassar College Skeletal Collection

Despite the negative aspects of research on human remains, skeletal collections are still a crucial component of educating anthropologists, biologists, and doctors. The compliance with NAGPRA is problematic. Many colleges and universities are out of compliance because they do not think that NAGPRA applies to them. There is still much work to do, and repatriation cannot occur unless researchers take the time to understand their collections. Documentation of remains is a useful way for museums to know whether repatriation should occur, and can help determine ancestry and identify descendent groups. What should a college or other institution do if they own collections that have no documentation of origin or ancestry? In cases like these, the handling and analysis of skeletons is necessary.

Vassar College is one such institution that has its own small collection of human skeletons for use as teaching aids. The Anthropology department houses the majority of this collection. Many have been part of the department for so long that current professors are unsure of their origin. Some have minimal documentation, while others have none at all. Two specimens, a complete skull and one cranium (a skull without the mandible), caught the attention of Professor April Beisaw because they do not appear to be from biological supply sources, and became the focus of my senior thesis. The complete skull (referred to as Individual 1) is a recent addition to the department, and was donated from the Vassar College Earth Science and Geography department in the fall of 2014. The cranium (referred to as Individual 2) has been part of the collection longer than any current professors can recall, but its color and condition is quite different from the rest of the collection. The goals of my thesis were to figure out the history of these remains, establish if they were procured legally and ethically, and determine if they could and should stay in the department teaching collection.

To begin, I attempted to find any information regarding skeletons or skulls being brought to Vassar, or any history of how skeletons have been used at the college. A search through the Vassar College archives and the newspaper archives did not turn up any information. I interviewed a few professors in the department, and one believed that Individual 1 may have been brought to Vassar by Professor Walter Fairservis who taught from 1969-1993. The Vassar College Archives did not contain any supporting information. Interviews with other faculty suggested that Individual 2 may have been part of the previous museum at the college, or that it may have been obtained through cadaver studies. The archives did not have any information regarding cadaver studies at Vassar College. Given the unknown origin of both individuals, to determine if repatriation is necessary I needed to perform a detailed forensic-style analysis and create a biological profile. This information could be used to narrow down the search for documents or provide new leads as to the identities and origins of both individuals.

Description of Remains

Individual 1

Background

This skull was recently given to Professor April Beisaw from the Earth Science and Geography department at Vassar College. Before this, the skull had been sitting on the shelf in an office space for approximately 4 years. Lois Horst originally discovered it in a barn on the Vassar College Farm and Ecological Preserve among other things that were part of the previous museum. She said she found the skull in a box with a plastic skull model, and neither had any tags or information. Lois Horst described the condition of the skull as having remnants of hair and flesh. Heavy cracking was present when it was found in the barn. Approximately one year ago, she had the skull cleaned to remove the mold and waxy buildup that had been accumulating.

White Elmer's glue was also applied at this time to the cracks in an attempt to stabilize the cranial vault. I was unable to find any records of the skull before its discovery in 2007.

Physical Analysis

Condition

This individual's skull is not missing any major elements, and is in decent shape (fig. 1). The bones are off-white in color, with some areas indicative of where remnants of flesh had been removed, causing some light brown staining and waxy texture. There are no areas of adhering soil or soil staining visible. This suggests that Individual 1 did not come from a burial context. The cranium weighs 528.1g, and the mandible weighs 82.6g. The jaw is unattached, but there is some putty in the mandibular fossa where the condylar process fits. The cranial vault is heavily cracked, but has been glued back together with Elmer's glue. This process is not of professional standards, however, and there are many gaps or sections where the bone fragments are not aligned properly. There are some scratch marks visible on the inferior margin of the parietal, on the occipital, and near bregma on the sagittal suture. They appear to have been made by a sharp instrument, and consist of multiple, scraping lines (indicated on fig. 1). They are not consistent with professional incisions or cuts made during autopsy or dissection. There is slight asymmetry of the upper eye orbits and brow ridge. The left brow ridge shows thickening, and there is some slight projections in the orbits. This could be caused by previous trauma, or could be caused by natural human variation.

The mandible and maxilla are missing the majority of the teeth, but still contain all of the lower molars as well as a broken lower left premolar, all three of the upper right molars, and one upper left molar (fig. 2). Two of the lower molars, the lower premolar, and two of the upper molars were broken in half post-mortem and are missing their occlusal surfaces. One of the

lower molars is chipped and missing one of its cusps. No teeth were lost before death, as there is no indication of healing or closure where the teeth are missing. The teeth that remain are in fairly good condition, and do not contain any cavities or signs of disease. There is also no overcrowding, and the teeth seem fairly well aligned. This indicates that the individual had fairly good dental care and took care of their teeth. The overall condition of the teeth implies that this individual was not of lower socio-economic status. There are no indicators of stress or malnutrition on the teeth or the rest of the skull, supporting that this individual did not experience periods of starvation.

Sex

Male. Non-metric cranial characteristics include a prominent supraorbital ridge, a blunt supraorbital margin, strong nuchal lines with a prominent nuchal crest, and a squared, flared, mandible with a wide ramus. These traits are all more consistent with male morphology. The metric analysis using FORDISC 3.0 also indicates the individual was male, as the female choices were the least probable for each ancestry choice.

Age at Death

Adult aged 25-35. Age estimation using ectocranial cranial suture closure was difficult because of the heavy cracking and gluing in the cranial vault. Many sutures were broken and then glued back together. All sutures do appear to be completely fused, signifying that the individual was at least a young adult. However, the maxillary sutures are all intact. The incisive suture (IS) was completely fused and obliterated. The anterior median palatine (AMP), transverse palatine (TP), and posterior median palatine (PMP) were fused but not obliterated. The earliest age for obliteration of the incisive suture is 25 years of age, and under the age of 43

there is no obliteration of the AMP or TP sutures (Mann et al. 1987). Overall, maxillary suture closure gives an age range at death of 25-43.

Analysis of teeth proved to be a better method for age estimation in this case. All of the third molars are completely erupted, indicating that the individual was at least 21 years of age. Occlusal wear analysis suggests an age between 25 and 35 years of age, as there was complete wear on the first molars, moderate wear on the second molars, and minimal wear on the third molars (Bass 1995).

Ancestry

Determination of ancestry is inconclusive. Using nonmetric techniques described by Bass (1995) and Burns (2013), Individual 1 has many traits that are suggestive of European origin. These traits include the presence of aninion hook and rugged muscle markings, and the absence of wormian bones. In addition, the face has a nasal spine and nasal sill in combination with a narrow nasal aperture with thin and tall nasals. The face exhibited little alveolar prognathism, with retreating zygomatics, and the eye orbits are sloped and slightly rounded. The chin is prominent and slightly bilobate, and the palate is parabolic with a crooked palatine suture. The chin is especially consistent with European features. Overall, the non-metric analysis is suggestive of European ancestry.

Cranial measurements were taken and evaluated against a discriminant model including different populations in FORDISC 3.0 (Jantz & Ousley 2007). The first analysis using the Forensic Data Bank (FDB) classified Individual 1 as a Hispanic male with a posterior probability of 0.670 and a typicality R of 0.784. Posterior probabilities represent the probability of membership for the unknown in each group based on the relative distances to each group, and sum to 1. Typicality represents how likely that individual belongs to a particular group, and it

takes into account variability within each group. For example, the typicality R for this individual means that 78.4% of the total sample from those in the Hispanic sample population would be as far or farther from the group's average measurements. Higher values for posterior probability and typicality R mean that the individual is more similar to that chosen population (Fordisc Help File Version 1.35). The slight asymmetry of the brow ridge along with gluing of the vault may be causing complications for FORDISC.

Although this individual was placed into the category of Hispanic, the term is very broad and not all groups that fall under this category have similar traits (Chunn 2008). For example, individuals with Southwest Hispanic ancestry will have more Native American and European traits, while individuals with Southeast Hispanic ancestry will have more African and European traits. The data in the FDB includes populations mostly from the U.S./Mexico border, and is not representative of all that identify as Hispanic (Spradley et al. 2008). The information available in FORDISC 3.0 limits this analysis, and there is no way to tell what Hispanic means for this individual.

The second analysis used the Howell's data. This database classified the skull as Zalavar (Hungary) with a posterior probability of 0.448 and a typicality R of 0.566 and Norse (Oslo, Norway) with a posterior probability of 0.432 and typicality R of 0.625. The metric results complicate the analysis because of the classification of Hispanic in the FDB. However, the Howell's database does not include Hispanic populations, so comparison is not possible. Overall, the two approaches can rule out African or Asian and Native American ancestry, but cannot confidently determine if the individual is of European or Hispanic background, or the specific Hispanic population of origin.

Individual 2

Background

There is little to no information about this individual. There is no documentation of who brought it to Vassar College and when, where it originated from, or the ancestry of the individual. It has been part of the anthropology department teaching collection for decades, and was handled by professors and students. Due to concerns over its origin, it was removed from the general teaching collection in 2012 and is now only used for analyses such as this.

Condition

This cranium is much darker in color is heavier than the first skull, weighing 733.0g (122.3g heavier than Individual 1). This individual is missing the mandible. There is dark brown staining throughout, and fine dirt and dust is apparent as well. All of this suggests Individual 2 came from a burial context. The cranium is missing the left portion of the face: the zygomatic, inferior eye orbit, and palate (fig. 3). The frontal bone contains the label “30” outlined with a square, and it appears to be drawn on with black marker. There is also a flower shaped sticker on the occipital with the label “303”. There is no way to tell when these markings were added, although they are slightly faded indicating they are not recent. There are no teeth remaining, and pre-mortem tooth loss is evident because of healing and repair of tooth cavities. This individual shows signs of tooth decay and advanced healing in the palate. The right styloid process was broken off post-mortem, and the left styloid process is long. There are no obvious cracks or marks on any portion of the cranium. Severe tooth loss, as seen in this individual, indicates that they did not have access to a dentist to prevent tooth decay, and is attributed to lower socioeconomic status.

Sex

Male. Non-metric cranial characteristics include a prominent supraorbital ridge, a blunt supraorbital margin, and strong nuchal lines with a prominent nuchal crest. This cranium also contains very large mastoid processes. These traits are all more consistent with male morphology. The metric analysis using FORDISC 3.0 also indicates the individual was male, as the female choices were the least probable for each ancestry choice.

Age at Death

Adult >60 years. Age of this individual was easier to determine than in Individual 1 because the sutures were all intact and visible. Using the ectocranial suture closure scoring system, this individual was determined to be between 34 and 63 with a mean of 52 (Meindl & Lovejoy 1985). Analysis of the maxillary sutures was also possible. The incisive and posterior median palatine sutures are completely obliterated, which indicates an individual of at least 60 (Mann et al. 1987). The anterior median palatine and transverse palatine are fully fused and partially obliterated. There were no teeth present, making occlusal wear analysis impossible.

Ancestry

Determination of ancestry is inconclusive. Using nonmetric techniques described by Bass (1995) and Burns (2013), Individual 2 exhibits many traits common in Europeans. These traits include the presence of a slight inion hook, and the absence of wormian bones. In addition, the face has a nasal spine and slight nasal sill. Although the cranium is missing the left zygomatic and inferior eye orbit, the nasal aperture is narrow and the face exhibits little alveolar prognathism. This individual also has traits common in other populations as well. The eye orbits are sloped and slightly rounded, which are more common in both Asian and African populations. The zygomatics are more forward projecting than receding. The palate is hyperbolic, and the palatine suture is not straight. This palate shape is more indicative of African ancestry. Individual

2 also has a post-bregmatic depression that is more common in African populations. The portions of the skull that are missing, especially the mandible, would have provided more information and may have helped elucidate ancestry.

Cranial measurements were taken and evaluated against a discriminant model including different populations in FORDISC 3.0. The first analysis used the FDB. When given the option of black male, white male, Japanese male, or Native American male Individual 2 was classified as a white male with a posterior probability of 0.957 and a typicality of 0.025. The second analysis used the Howell's data. When given the option of 19th or 20th century white male or Egyptian male the cranium was classified as 20th century white male with a posterior probability of 0.755 and a typicality R of 0.057. When given the option of white male or Egyptian in the Howell's database, Individual 2 was classified as Egyptian with a posterior probability of 0.244 and a typicality R of 0.015. While these posterior probabilities are high for both the FDB and the Howell's data, especially for the classification as white, the typicality R for each is very low which indicates questionable probability of membership in that group. Determination of ancestry is limited by the sample populations available, resulting in the measurements of this individual to match most closely with white male despite it being fairly different from the mean. However, this analysis can firmly rule out Native American or Asian as options for ancestry.

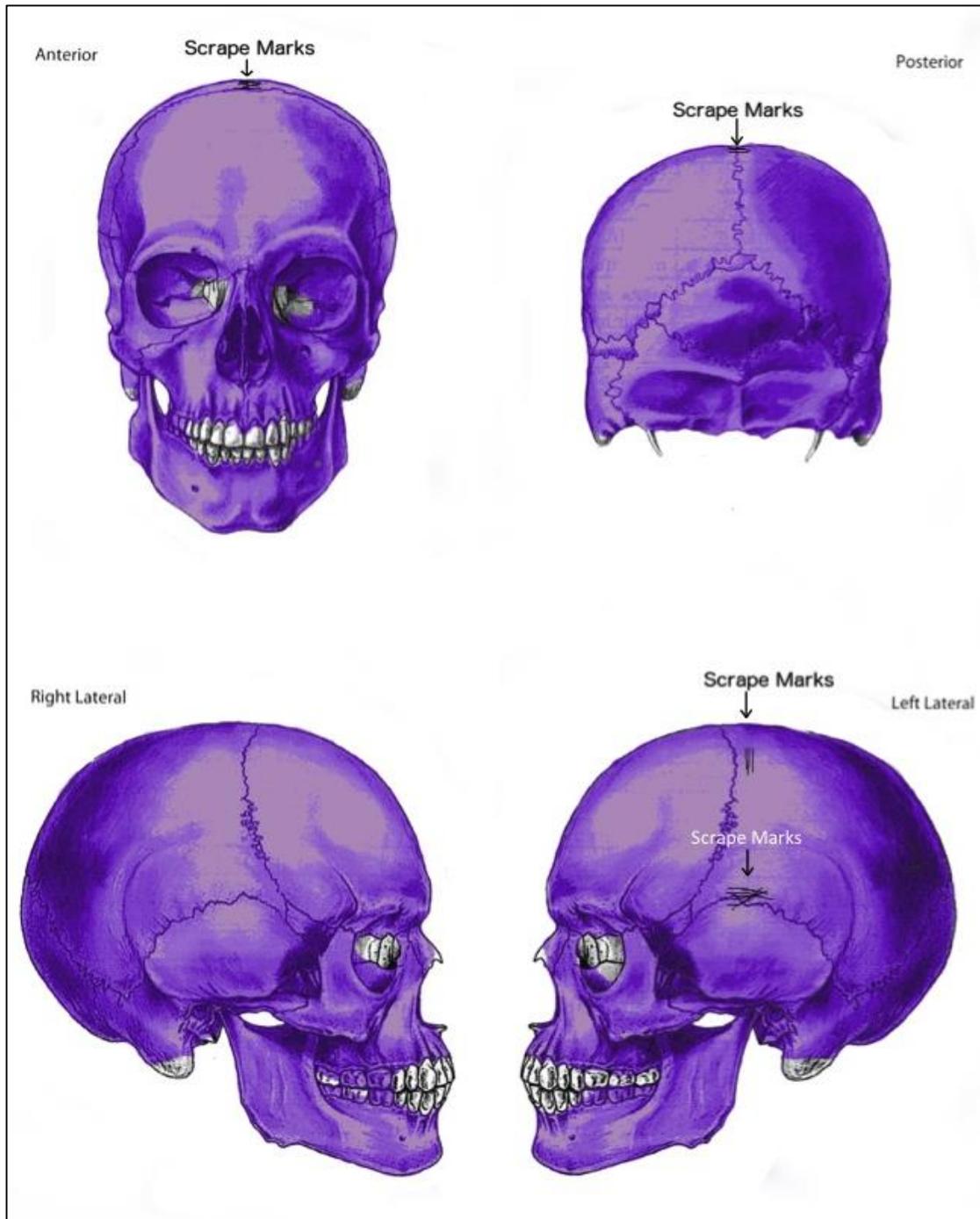


Figure 1. Individual 1. Shaded purple regions indicate the present bones and condition. Black lines indicate the scrape marks present on bone.

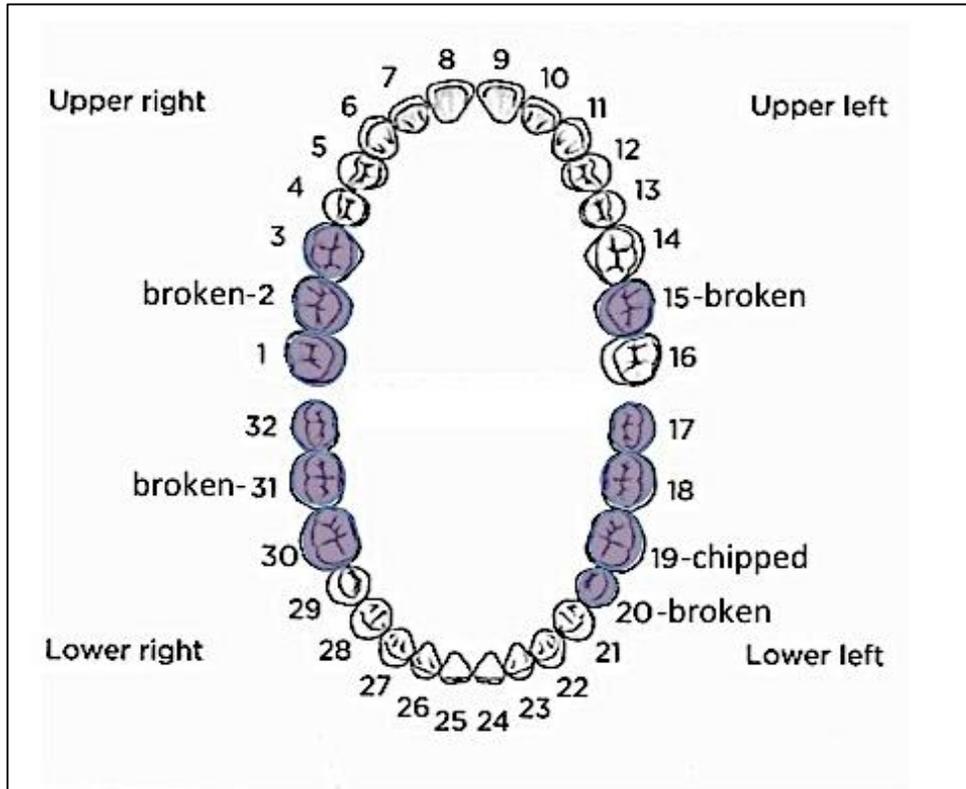


Figure 2. Dental chart of Individual 1. Purple shading indicates teeth that are present. Broken and chipped teeth are labelled.

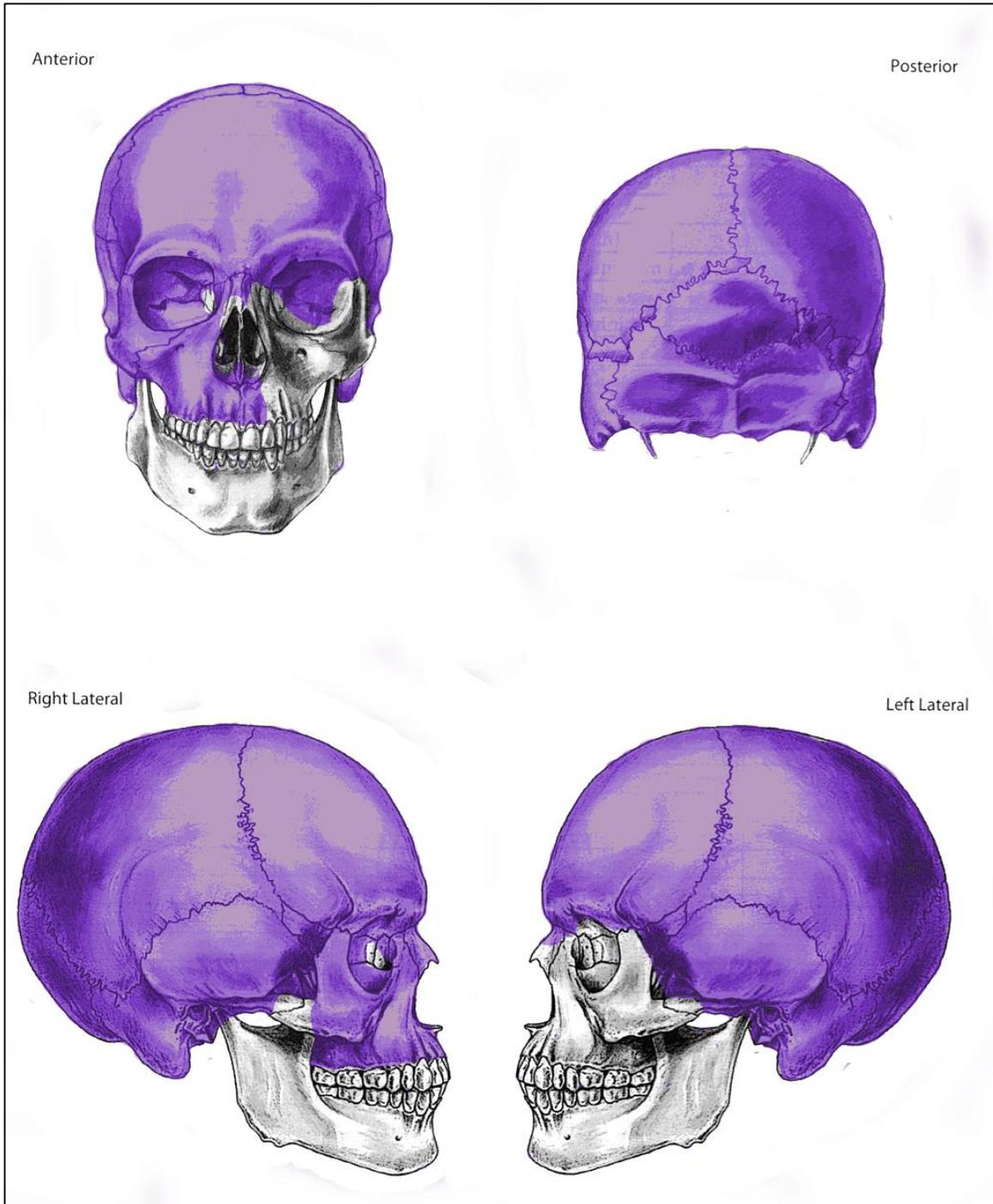


Figure 3. Individual 2. Shaded purple regions indicate bones that are present.

Discussion of Remains

So far, no documentation regarding the source of either individual has been found. The information gained in the forensic analysis did not produce new leads. Interviews have resulted in speculation that cannot be confirmed. I did discover that the Anthropology teaching collection is not the only collection on campus; The Biology department has its own collection, but it is currently in storage and I was unable to gain access to it. An analysis of this collection in the future might be called for to determine its origin as well.

Discussion of Individual 1

This individual was gifted to the Anthropology department from the Earth Science and Geography department staff. Before this, it had spent four years on a shelf in an office after its discovery in 2007. The fact that it was discovered with artifacts that were part of the previous Vassar College Museum of Natural History (commissioned in 1862) suggests that it was part of this collection, but there are no records of human remains being on display. It has also been suggested that the skull could have been a part of a cadaver. However, there have been no accounts of cadaver use at Vassar. The skull also does not contain the typical mark of a dissection: A cut mark that extends all the way around the calvaria, separating the skull cap for access to the brain. While there are some cut marks present, they are not consistent with those made during dissection. They are more similar to marks made in an attempt to scrape and remove flesh from the skull. It is unlikely that this skull was retained from cadaver dissections.

Overall the skull appears healthy, and does not show any sign of disease or stress. Although there is some asymmetry in the brow ridge, it is unclear whether it is caused by trauma or is simply human variation. The condition of this individual is not suggestive of somebody of lower socio-economic status, which further complicates the origin. Since 19th century looters

typically robbed the bodies of those who were marginalized, looted remains usually show signs of poor healthcare. The analysis of ancestry was suggestive of European and Hispanic populations of origin, which means that NAGPRA does not apply for this individual. All information points towards the skull being classified as archaeological rather than modern, so it is not necessary to involve professional investigators.

Discussion of Individual 2

This individual has been a part of the Anthropology department longer than any current faculty can remember. The dark brown staining and remnants of dirt along with its heaviness indicate that it was in the ground for some period of time, most likely a burial of some sort. The numbered labeling of the skull could mean that it was a museum specimen or part of an archaeological collection. Analysis of ancestry was inconclusive, but ruled out Asian or Native American ancestry which means that NAGPRA does not apply to this individual. The non-metric analysis points towards a European ancestry, but the Howell's database brought up the possibility of Egyptian.

One professor has suggested that Individual 2 was taken from the American Museum of Natural History and brought to Vassar by Walter Fairservis, who was a professor in the anthropology department from 1969 until he retired in 1993. Fairservis was also associated with the Peabody Museum at Harvard, the University Museum at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum in Seattle. It is known that Walter Fairservis excavated graves in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and if this cranium was the result of one of these excavations it would have traits similar to Egyptian. However, information from various archives and publications regarding the skeletal materials uncovered at his excavations is not detailed enough to match up anything with Individual 2. Currently, there are not any

populations from Pakistan or Afghanistan in FORDISC 3.0 to compare this individual to. If the database is expanded, future analysis may lead to more conclusive results of ancestry.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

The treatment of human remains has changed greatly over the past few decades. From a legal perspective, descendant groups have more power in deciding the fate of their ancestors, and they are given a voice in decision-making. While attitudes towards skeletal remains have not changed, their treatment definitely has. Society continues to have a morbid curiosity with skeletons, and people still flock to see them in museums and movies. The medical gaze and “post-mortem” gaze will not disappear in the near future, but museum curators and researchers can minimize their effects. The way skeletons are used can change how we see the past because it can make certain events less significant. When we are surrounded by skeletons in a less serious manner, we don’t always remember who they once were and instead see them as objects. Institutions, whether they are museums or educational institutions, need to take care in how they discuss and display remains. A museum exhibit might be most effective when visitors realize that it’s not simply a “pretty picture,” that it shows the marks of social contacts and conflicts (Classen, C., & Howes, D. 2006: 219). Similarly, looters and grave robbers need to be dealt with seriously, and cannot be seen as harmless relics of the past. They should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

There are still many changes that need to be made: repatriation efforts need to continue, and the way we speak about human remains also needs to be addressed. Laws pertaining to repatriation of other ancestral groups might be useful moving forward. More attention needs to be paid to skeletal collections to ensure that they are legal and ethical. Skeletons can be extremely valuable, but just because they are used as teaching tools does not mean that they can

be treated as objects. Scientists and the general public should be less ambivalent about the use of human remains, and instead need to recognize that these human remains are not just objects, but were once living people and should be treated with respect.

Human remains are still available for purchase by researchers and educators, but today they are certified donations from the deceased. Other companies are creating realistic casts and replicas of skulls and skeletons that can be useful in the classroom setting. Most of these are hyper-realistic and even contain the original suture lines and morphologies. These alternative options are useful ways that educators can still demonstrate the characteristics of the human body without compromising a real skeleton. The Anthropology department at Vassar has a few of these casts, allowing for students to see a variety of examples without compromising the ethical responsibilities of the college. Human remains should not be used for display, spectacle, and collections, but are instead incredibly important relics of the past that need to be treated as such.

The Vassar College teaching collection is an example of how past attitudes towards skeletal collections are still relevant today. The overall lack of documentation for the two individuals studied in this thesis is a reflection of the privilege that science and institutions have been given over human remains. Scientists have been given the responsibility and the right to determine the best course of action, but this is often used for their own benefit. In the case of the Anthropology department collection, the remains of two individuals have been acquired for educational purposes but the identities of the people they were have been lost. They became objects to study, and the identity of the person was deemed unimportant. They may have been obtained in what was considered a legal manner at the time, and the collectors probably did not think that they were being unethical. The condition in which they were held, especially Individual 1, is also indicative of the attitudes towards keeping human skeletons, as it was left

undiscovered for a while and then put on display on a shelf in an office. The objectification of human bodies, especially of human skeletons, is not something that only happened in the past. It is an ongoing struggle that many groups continue to deal with, and the tensions between science and culture have complicated this issue. This issue has been seen most publically between Native American groups and archaeologists and museums.

What is the best course of action when dealing with human remains? There is no one right answer, but there should be clear guidelines to help in the decision making process. Ideally, human remains that have been part of a burial should remain where they are, regardless of ancestry. Disturbance continues to happen, however, as construction of buildings and roads continues as urbanization spreads, like the case of the African Burial Ground. Bodies are being uncovered frequently, and it is not always possible to keep them in situ. Most states have laws preventing people from digging up graves, but many also have amended their laws to include permits for professional archaeologists to excavate graves. For example, New York State enacted the “Unmarked Burial Site Protection Act” in 2012 (Unmarked Burial Site 2012). This act requires that a person contact the medical examiner immediately after uncovering any unmarked burial. If the coroner determines that the burial is of archaeological rather than criminal importance, than the state archaeologist is called to examine the remains. Any Native remains then fall under the typical NAGPRA protocol, while the state archaeologist is responsible for non-native remains. While this act protects burials and makes it illegal for them to be looted, it still gives archaeologists authority over human remains and does not dictate what to do when non-native skeletons are discovered. There is currently nothing to prevent archeologists from retaining skeletal material if they deem it important for research purposes. Even Native

American remains that fall under NAGPRA are sometimes retained by archaeologists for this very reason.

In cases where skeletons were uncovered decades ago and may have been part of a collection for much longer, such as the Vassar College collection, research is required to move forward. Museums and institutions should be trying to analyze and document the skeletons in their collections to ensure that they are complying fully with the laws in place. If the origin and ancestry of skeletons is unknown, people should be working towards figuring it out. Especially in teaching situations, knowing the ancestry of the decedent is crucial in teaching students about forensic anthropology. As we've seen, however, this is not always the case and compliance can be a struggle.

In cases where minimal information can be found about remains, and the events surrounding their procurement cannot be determined, then it may not be a bad thing for them to remain in the collection as teaching aids. Not all groups desire repatriation, so there is no one standard protocol for every set of remains. Rather than trying to repatriate them to a group that may or may not be the living descendants, the remains should be utilized to teach the next generation of anthropologists and scientists about forensic profiling and ethical treatment. Real human remains are always more accurate than even the best plastic models, and are extremely useful for learning human anatomy and osteology. It is more disrespectful to have skeletons given to another group or to be reburied without a confirmed identity. Repatriation is only a positive thing if it is the appropriate thing to do in that case. If more information comes to light later on, then the situation can be reassessed and the plan can change.

The inconclusive analyses of both individuals complicate the ethical responsibilities of the department and the college. The only firm results are that neither is of Native American

ancestry, so NAGPRA does not apply. While this can be considered a positive thing, it also leaves more questions as to how to proceed. There are currently no protocols or laws regarding the treatment of non-Native remains in an institutional setting. With the current information, there is no way to determine if the remains were obtained illegally or unethically. The individuals may be reanalyzed when more resources are available, so future identification is not impossible. More information about the collection may be found, and cases can be reevaluated if and when that occurs. At this time, the skull and cranium can both remain part of the collection since there is no indication of illegal activity. Students and professors should continue to analyze them and use them for teaching purposes.

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