

# Establishing the identity of a murder victim



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When someone is killed in a crime, the body isn't always discovered right away. There are times that by the time the body is discovered by crime scene investigators, there is nothing left but the bones and teeth. For example, " A post on the department's Facebook page says human remains discovered in March 2018 have now been identified as 35-year-old Ronald Jessup Brightwell of Springfield." (Keegan, 2019) This was a man that went missing back in 2012. With that being said, we will look at the different methods that are used to identify human remains in cases such as this that the body isn't discovered until all that is left is the teeth and bones.

When it comes to the teeth of human remains, they are unique to each person which allows crime scene investigators to be able to identify through this method. According to (Freeman, n. d) the forensic dentists can do so through dental records if and when they are available for comparison. This part of the body can withstand a lot even in the case their body was burned. In fact, the teeth even remain as the body continues to decay. This is because tooth enamel is harder than even human remains or as we call skeletal remains.

When it comes to identifying human remains according to dental records, the forensic dentist will examine the teeth according to (Freeman, n. d). It is at this time that they go through a list of dental records that are most likely to be similar and try to find one that matches. When it comes to comparing teeth to dental records, it is believed that the best results come from the comparison of X-rays. On the other hand, there is a process that has to be done when it comes to teeth that are still intact to the human remains which involves surgically revealing the jaws.

Without dental records, being able to identify a person according to their teeth can be harder, according to (Freeman, n. d). However, it doesn't make it impossible. In fact, if a person had a chipped front tooth, this could be used as a way to identify the person simply by having a friend or family member verify that it was who they believed the remains belonged to. Otherwise, DNA samples can be retrieved through what is called the pulp which is located at the center of the tooth. Although this part of the tooth is more susceptible to damage through different conditions including fire but on a positive note it withholds for many years.

When it comes to the bones of human remains, there are ways to compare the bone in order to determine whether they belong to a male or female, according to (Forensic Anthropology, n. d). In the circumstances that only bones remain, the crime scene investigator can examine the pelvis to determine the sex. For example, the female would have a U-shaped sub pubic arch while the male has a V-shape. Also taking into consideration that women were made to bear children generally the pelvis will have more space in preparation for when they do have children. Another thing that is able to distinguish if it is a male or female according to the bones is the fact that the jaw of the skull is not only bigger but more of a square shape in comparison to a female. However, the eye sockets are more of the shape of a rectangle. On the other hand, when you consider the fact that men generally are more muscular than women, this means that their bones in general are bigger.

When it comes to studying the skull itself, crime scene investigators are able to determine what ethnicity group the human remains belong to, according to (Forensic Anthropology, n. d). The ethnicity groups are set up into three

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different ones which includes what they call Caucasoid, Negroid, and Mongoloid. It has been found during the studying of different skulls among the three groups that the cranium in a white person tends to be not only long but also narrow as well as high. For Negroids, it is also long and narrow, however, the cranium is lower in comparison. As for people in the Mongoloid group, the cranium tends to be more of a rounded shape. On the other hand, the nasal opening can be another factor to determine the ethnicity of a person. For instance, when you compare a Negroid to a Caucasian the Negroid has a broader opening while the Caucasian has narrow as well as higher nasal opening. However, the Mongoloid's nasal opening is in the middle of the two groups when compared.

Age is something that can also be determined based on human remains, according to (Forensic Anthropology, n. d). For example, if the bones found happened to be a significant amount chances are it would have belonged to a child around the age of a toddler because of the fact that younger people such as children tend to have over 200 more bones in comparison to an adult. This is something that happens because of ossification which is where stages of bone formation take place as the person gets older.

Looking at bones is also a way to distinguish who the person was simply by any evidence of injuries that were left behind, according to (Forensic Anthropology, n. d). For example, if a person had a fracture on their wrist, chances are there would be a noticeable mark in that area of the bone. A detail as significant as this could help significantly by narrowing down who had this sort of injury because it certainly isn't often that someone obtains an injury like that.

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Looking at the different characteristics of a person's teeth and various parts of the bones, you can see how there are things that set them apart to help narrow down whether it was a male or female, the ethnicity of the person, the age, or even past injuries that were obtained. For instance, having a U-shaped pelvis would indicate that the human remains belonged to a male. With that being said, carefully examining every detail about the human remains gives a good chance of being able to determine who the individual was. It would be just like the case such as this one where the man wasn't discovered until 6 years of missing, but they were able to figure out that the human remains belonged to a 35 year old male in Springfield so that his family would have closure in his disappearance.

## References

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