

Archaeology Today



ANP 203: Introduction to Archaeology
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Scientific Method

1. Define a problem
2. Establish one or more hypotheses
3. Determine what evidence is needed
4. Collect data through excavation or observation
5. Test the hypothesis using the data
6. Reject, revise and/or retest hypotheses as necessary

You're Hired!



The Excavation



The Finds



The Skeleton?!



The Facts

- Found a skeleton in the cellar
- House was colonial, likely 17th c.
- Skeleton buried with the other garbage
 - Includes broken ceramics, animal bones, old coins, window lead
- We can do osteological, historic and ceramics analysis to help...

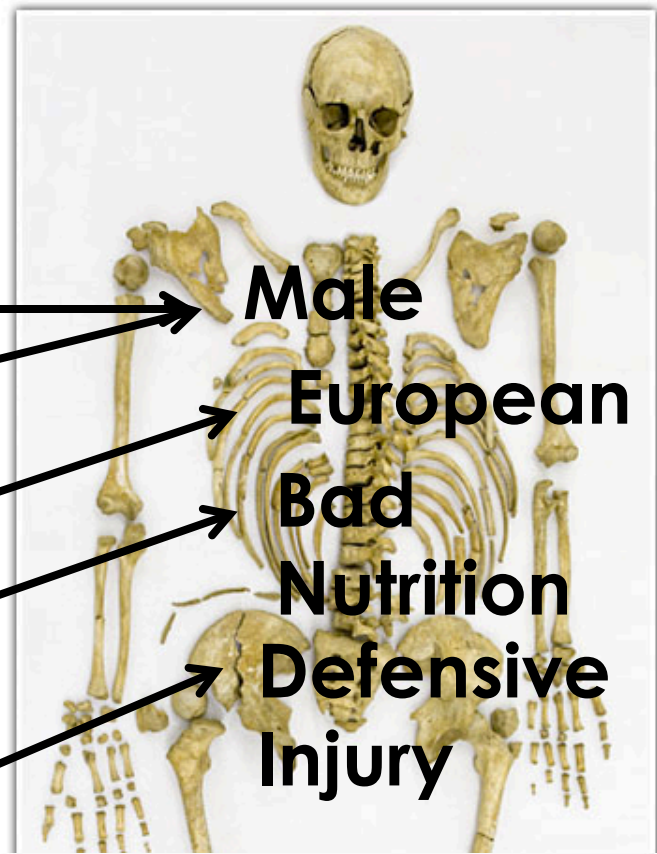


Low-Level Theory

- Data and observations about objects
 - Ex. Length of a bone, color of a ceramic glaze
- This data tells us *why* this object is what we call it

Low-Level Data

- This skeleton has a strong square jawline
- This skeleton has an upright slender pelvis
- This skeleton has square eye sockets
- This skeleton has pitting and new bone growth along the long bones
- This skeleton has a fractured wrist
- This pottery is stoneware with little decoration
- This pottery has stained edges



Low-Level Evidence

- Skeleton:

- Teenage male
- European descent
- He suffered from poor nutrition, had minor back injuries, and was fighting a bad infection
- Fracture on his wrist that he incurred around the time of death, and is consistent with self-defense injuries

- Ceramics:

- Ceramics found lying over the remains are inexpensive and broken
- Date from the mid to late 19th century

Middle-Level Theory

- Links archaeological data with the human behavior that produced it
 - How does the low-level data connect with real human behavior?
- Need to find ways to examine the invisible behaviors
 - Historic records
 - Comparison
 - Ethnographic Archaeology
 - Experimental Archaeology

Historic Evidence

- Historical records show that a family settled in Leavy Neck in 1662
 - A husband, wife, a son and two daughters, and two unnamed indentured servants
 - Ran a small plantation
 - House was abandoned by the 1680s
- Virginia statute in 1661 forbade the private burial of servants so that mistreatment or foul play could be noticed.

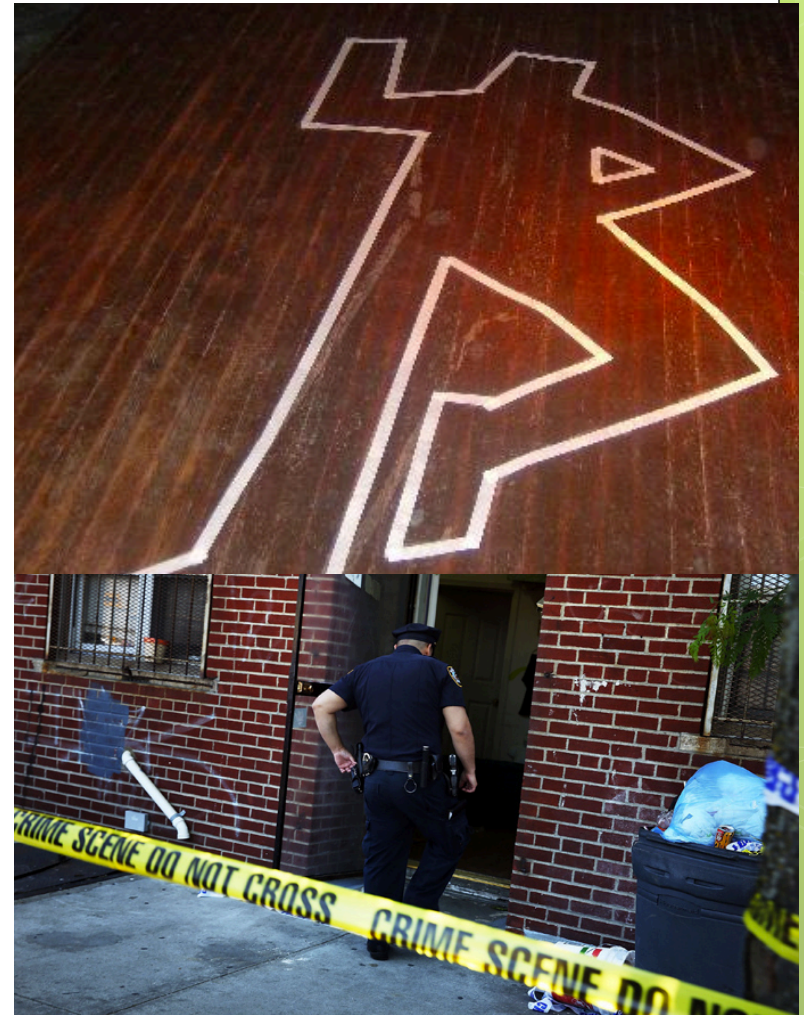
Comparative Evidence

- This burial is very different from others found in this region and period
 - Most people were buried in cemeteries and had deep burials with some type of marker regardless of their status
 - This burial is shallow and not in a cemetery



Ethnographic Comparison

- This burial is similar to modern day murders by relatives or family members
 - When people want burials to go unnoticed, they will bury the individual in an unmarked grave
 - Unfinished basements are popular for this type of burial because the body doesn't need to be moved from the house and most people won't dig in the basement.



Middle-Level Evidence

- Text:

- Family settled on Leavy Neck in 1662: husband, wife, a son and two daughters, and two unnamed indentured servants
- House was abandoned by the 1680s
- Virginia statute in 1661 forbade the private burial of servants so that mistreatment or foul play could be noticed.

- Historic Comparison: Burial is very different from others found in this region and period- deep burial with grave marker

- This burial is shallow and not in a cemetery.

- Ethnographic Comparison: Burial is similar to modern day murders by relatives or family members

- Unfinished basements are popular for this type of burial because the body doesn't need to be moved from the house and most people won't dig in the basement.

High-Level Theory

- Ultimate goal- answering the big *why*
- These are questions like...
 - Why did we develop agriculture?
 - Why did the Americas develop so differently from Europe, Asia and Africa?
 - Your goal is dependent on your paradigm

What Happened to the Boy in the Cellar?

- Based on his nutrition, injuries and defensive wounds, it is likely he was one of the indentured servants
 - His bones reveal a lifetime of hard work
- Likely killed during a fight or while being abused, buried under the floor to hide his death
 - Virginia statute in 1661 forbade the private burial of servants so that mistreatment or foul play could be noticed
 - This was definitely foul play, so they hid the evidence under the floor
 - The family wasn't wealthy, so they likely didn't have the money to pay any fines or get a proper burial
 - Moved soon after the incident