

Objective

This activity aims to get us thinking critically about some of the traits commonly-used to estimate sex from a skull. We will observe these morphological features as they manifest in our own (and maybe a partner's) skull with the aim of recording and discussing the continuum of cranial variation related, in part, to sex-based differences.

Materials

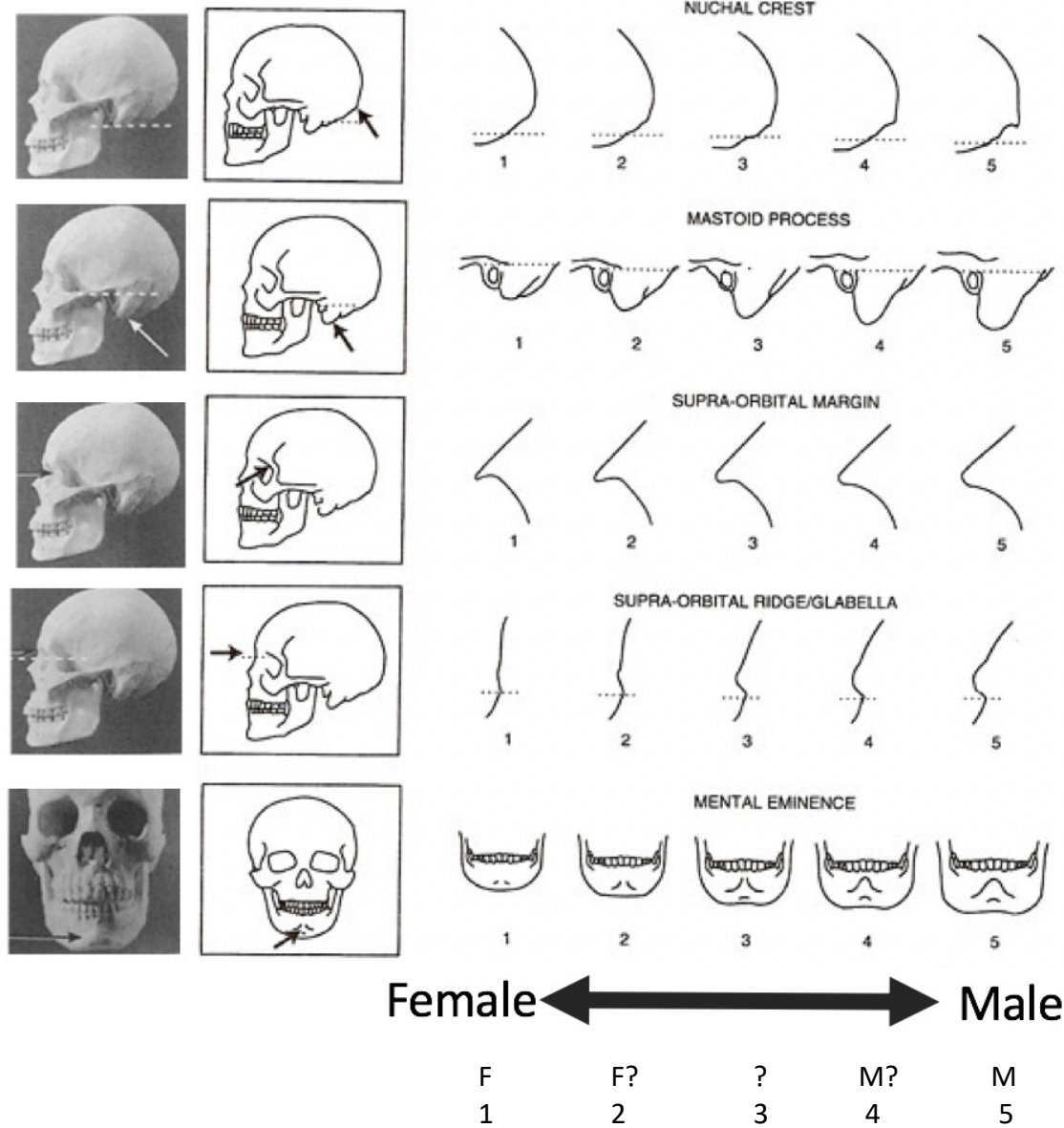
- Playdoh
- Our own skulls
- Access to figure for scoring cranial sexual dimorphism from Buikstra & Ubelaker (1994), published also in sources such as White & Folkens (2005).

Method**Step 1: Playdoh Modelling**

- 1) Break into groups of 5 people
- 2) Before looking at the sexual dimorphism figure (presented on pg 2), use the playdoh to each model one of the five features used to estimate sex from the skull.
 - a. Nuchal Crest
 - b. Mastoid Process
 - c. Supraorbital margin
 - d. Glabella (brow ridge)
 - e. Mental eminence
- 3) Compare your model to the figure (pg 2). Which morphological manifestation does it best match?
- 4) Pass your model once to the right (it may be easier for you to move one chair to the right). Using the figure (pg 2) model another morphological variant in the continuum of sexual dimorphism for that feature.
- 5) Repeat step 4 until all five expressions have been sculpted.

**Step 2: Self-Assessment**

- 1) Feel the features of your own cranium. How would you score your own morphological features? It may help to compare to your recently created 3D playdoh models!
- 2) What factors may limit your ability to score your skull like this?
- 3) Total your average feature score – does it agree with your sex (or gender, if you would prefer!). Discuss.



Score /5	Ind. 1	Ind. 2
Nuccal Crest		
Mastoid Process		
Supra-Orbital Margin		
Glabella		
Mental Eminence		
Average		
Est. Sex		

Figure from White & Folkens (2005), after Walker in Buikstra & Ubelaker (1994)