



Physical Anthropology Section - 2013

H27 The Contributions of Richard Jantz to the Development, Implementation, and Continuance of the Forensic Anthropology Data Bank

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have a better understanding of the historical development and current status of the Forensic Anthropology Data Bank (FDB).

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by detailing the significance of Richard Jantz's involvement in the implementation and continuation of the FDB.

The FDB was created in 1986 with a grant from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). The concept of this NIJ-funded research initiative was sparked by the need to obtain modern skeletal reference collections: it was clear that the Terry and Hamann-Todd collections did not best represent variation in modern Americans.¹ In effect, Dr. Jantz recognized the issue of external validity that would be stressed decades later in the *Daubert* guidelines. Clyde Snow first commented on the need for modern skeletal reference data and suggested data bank curation as a solution.² In 1983, a committee appointed by then American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) Physical Anthropology Section President Michael Finnegan further developed the concept. The initial committee consisted of Clyde Snow, Larry Angel, Stanley Rhine, and Richard Jantz, with Douglas Ubelaker replacing Clyde Snow at a later date.³ Ellis Kerley also played a critical role in the development of the FDB, providing external reviewer support.⁴ While these historical aspects of the development of the FDB are well described in the literature and by the professionals that observed them directly or indirectly, Richard Jantz's impact on the implementation and continuation of the FDB is, to an extent, lesser known.

Originally designed to meet the need for archiving metric, non-metric, and demographic information from positively identified forensic anthropological cases that are returned to family, the FDB provided the first relational database of modern skeletal data made publicly available to further research in forensic anthropology. The FDB is unique as it is derived from modern forensic cases and provides up-to-date, timely reference data that meet the needs of the changing demographic structure of our society. The FDB was initially conceived as a tool for case submissions by practicing forensic anthropologists through standard data collection procedures, archiving this data to further the discipline. However, as pointed out by Jantz and Moore-Jansen, a perceived problem of the FDB was how much time forensic anthropologists can justifiably spend on data collection efforts, considering other job commitments, time spent processing the remains, and compiling information from the medical examiner, medical records, law enforcement, or family.²

To circumvent the time constraints faced by these practitioners, Jantz or his graduate students visited numerous collections, measuring and recording biological information on a large number of skeletons. To date, Richard Jantz is directly responsible for collecting over 70% of the data in the FDB. Dr. Jantz has also been instrumental in diversifying the FDB data. Through working with collaborators from outside institutions, a large number of otherwise under-represented groups, such as American Blacks, Hispanics, and Japanese, are now thoroughly represented, necessary for updating forensic anthropological methods and furthering relevant research. Funding for travel to various collections (following NIJ grant funding) has been supported through an FDB assistantship provided by the Department of Anthropology at the University of Tennessee and FORDISC sales. Numerous publications, theses, and dissertations have benefited from data obtained from the FDB. The majority of forensic reference samples in FORDISC come directly from the FDB. Without Dr. Jantz's dedication to keeping up-to-date samples in the FDB, there would not be the relevant resources needed to further methodological development within our discipline.

Although Richard Jantz has retired, he still continues work on upkeep and expansion of the FDB. The FDB will continue, and the types of data contained will also be expanded (including radiographs and CT scans). The value of the data bank concept was so well illustrated by Dr. Jantz's work and the *Daubert* ruling that it will continue to be an essential source on modern human variation. A detailed report of Dr. Jantz's specific contributions to the continuance of the FDB along with those that have supported his endeavors will be discussed.

References:

1. Ayers H, Jantz R, Moore-Jansen P. Giles and Elliot race discriminant functions revisited: a test using recent forensic cases. In: Gill G, Rhine S, editors. *Skeletal attribution of race*. Albuquerque (NM): Maxwell Museum of Anthropology; 1990:65-71.
2. Jantz RL, Moore-Jansen PH. *A data base for forensic anthropology: structure content and analysis*. Knoxville (TN): The University of Tennessee, 1988.
3. Ousley S, Jantz R. The forensic data bank: documenting skeletal trends in the United States. In: Reichs K, editor. *Forensic osteology: advances in the identification of human remains*. 2nd ed. Springfield: Charles C Thomas; 1998:441-58.
4. Jantz RL. Cranial change in Americans: 1850-1975. *J Forensic Sci* 2001;46(4):784-7.

Richard Jantz, FDB, Anthropology