



## Physical Anthropology Section – 2008

### H80 Admixture and the Growing List of Racial Categories: Clarity or Confusion for Law Enforcement (and the Public)

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have a clear idea of problems in trying to categorize "race" in multiracial individuals, and adding to the existing categories of race may be an hindrance to police (and the public) in finding missing people.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating how in publicizing missing people, law enforcement must be able to use racial categories which are most familiar to the general public in order to increase the likelihood of finding these missing individuals; the goal is to bring closure for the families.

Any subdivision of the existing racial categories into smaller units to categorize biracial or tri-racial individuals/populations might confound law enforcement and the public.

"Race" is a convenient social tool employed by law enforcement for many practical purposes, an important one being to find people when they go missing. But the steady increase in biracial or tri-racial population groups and the constant flow of immigrants to the U.S. in the last fifty years have complicated the racial picture to the point where it is becoming very difficult to fit people into their neat racial categories as depicted on job application forms. "Race" is already a questionable concept (biologically); consequently, any attempt to pinpoint hybridization phenotypically, i.e., *cablinasian* which, supposedly, is a mixture of African, Phillipino, and Asian ancestries, might be more a result of political correctness rather than reality. In practice, this *cablinasian* category will certainly cause confusion among law enforcement and the public since phenotypically these individuals would either have more *Asian* traits or more *African* traits (and less of any other traits) depending on the random sorting of genes in inheritance. In short, these individuals will be viewed as either *Asian American* or *African American* by the public.

Interracial mating in this country goes back to the 17th century. In the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement in the late 60s and 70s and subsequent enlightened attitudes about race, interracial matings have steadily increased accompanied by a parallel increase in the population of biracial children. In addition, immigration has added to an already dynamic multi-cultural mix. All of this has led to further subdivision of the racial categories by the U.S. Census bureau (in coordination with state governments) to reflect this multiracial population. What we see is everything! The public can identify an African American, Asian American, Latino, or someone of European ancestry (Caucasoid) very easily. This makes it very convenient for law enforcement when they publicize the social race of a missing individual. But when unfamiliar terms are used, such as *cablinasian*, *creole*, or *chamorro* in conjunction with a photograph of the missing individual depicting African or Asian features, confusion ensues. We live in a cultural environment where every group wants to be identified by its own category or adheres to the concept of ideal types. If politicians concede to these groups and add to the existing racial categories out of a sense of duty or political correctness, then chaos will reign: the paperwork and existing problems of bureaucratic race will become even more complex. The general public, which includes law enforcement, is more familiar with the traditional categories, i.e., *African American* or black, *Asian American*, *Native American* or Indian, *Caucasian* or white, and *Hispanic American* or *Latino* which include Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican. Individuals who categorize themselves within new categories, such as *cablinasian*, *creole*, *chamorro*, *mestizo*, etc., can be—phenotypically—merged into the respective traditional categories.

In publicizing missing people, law enforcement must be able to use racial categories which are most familiar to the general public in order to increase the likelihood of finding these missing individuals; the goal is to bring closure for the families.

#### **Race, Biracial, Phenotype**