



## Physical Anthropology Section - 2012

### H64 The 40th Anniversary: Research Trends in the Physical Anthropology Section of the AAFS

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain an understanding of the trends and depth of research that has been conducted in the Physical Anthropology Section of the AAFS during its 40 year history.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by identifying forensic anthropological research trends over time. Specifically, this presentation will outline what forensic anthropologists do and how much effort they put into particular types of research.

In 1972, the AAFS welcomed a new section of forensic investigation into its organization: the combined Odontology/Physical Anthropology section. A few years later this combined group split forming their own sections. Cooperation with other sections was common during the first twenty years, where combined sessions highlighted interdisciplinary collaboration. More recently, as the field of forensic anthropology has become more established and welcomed in the forensic community, and as AAFS itself has matured, the number of presentations in a given year has increased dramatically. In 1972, anthropologists presented two papers, today the Physical Anthropology Section averages over a hundred oral and poster presentations. In addition, the Physical Anthropology section regularly hosts workshops and breakfast/lunch seminars, as well as presenting research in other AAFS sections.

This presentation, given on the Physical Anthropology section's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is timely. Twenty years ago the section hosted a session recalling the advances within the discipline. It was a look back at the last twenty years of work anthropologists have conducted in the AAFS. Recently, members of the section have expressed an opinion of possibly expanding our ranks with the inclusion of other branches of anthropologists (archaeologists, cultural anthropologists, and linguistic anthropologists). Now on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, instead of looking back on the history out of curiosity, the research trends should be reviewed with an eye towards truly understanding all the things the discipline is involved in. How much of the presentations and publications actually include archaeological research? How do the fields of cultural and linguistic anthropology influence research? Are we incorporating enough of our sister disciplines to acknowledge their contribution and inclusion into the Physical Anthropology section (if they so desire)?

This review of Physical Anthropology history in the AAFS builds upon Benedix and Belcher (2006), who presented a poster on the subject. Some of the categories that they originally included in their study have been modified, the recent AAFS meetings have been added, and years that were not represented in their original study have now been included. Ten categories of research have been identified: biological profile, identification, case studies, taphonomy, archaeology, trauma, pathology, human vs. non-human identification, discipline/history of the Physical Anthropology Section, and other (a loose collection of research that does not fit with the other categories). The specific details of each category will be outlined in the presentation.

A total of 1,976 presentations have been made in the Physical Anthropology section meetings of the AAFS between 1972 and 2010. The following table displays the ten research categories, the number of presentations that have been made in each category, and the percentage that category represents in the history of the section.

Category	Number	Percentage
Biological Profile	565	28.5%
Identification	252	12.8%
Case Studies	191	9.6%
Taphonomy	248	12.6%
Archaeology	96	4.9%
Trauma	147	7.4%
Pathology	20	1%
Human/Non-Human	23	1.2%
Discipline/History	260	13.2%
Other	174	8.8%

Through an examination of the annual AAFS meetings presentations and anthropology publications in the *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, a discussion will be presented on the trends in the Physical Anthropology Section and its ever expanding research directions. It is hoped that with this history in mind, the attendee will have a clear understanding of the research done and will thus be better prepared to discuss the future direction of the Physical Anthropology Section.

#### Physical Anthropology, Trends, History