



### A144 Increasing Graduate Student Diversity in Forensic Anthropology Through Research

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**Learning Overview:** After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand how a diverse research agenda or applied focus can serve to increase diversity in forensic anthropology graduate students and professionals. This presentation focuses on published forensic anthropological research and explores diversity in research as one concept for attracting and retaining underrepresented, socially defined racial and ethnic groups.

**Impact on the Forensic Science Community:** This presentation will impact the forensic science community by bringing attention to a perceived lack of diversity in development of forensic anthropological methods and validation studies.

Diversity and inclusion are at the forefront of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) recruitment, including the forensic sciences. As evidence of commitment to diversity and inclusion, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) began the process of creating a Diversity Committee in 2016. In 2018, The National Institute of Justice (NIJ), a major funding source for the forensic sciences, published a report, “The Importance of Diversity and Inclusion in the Forensic Sciences,” citing that diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and background in the workplace drives innovation, creativity, and enhances problem solving.<sup>1</sup> The NIJ report refers to the “leaky pipeline,” indicating that while diversity is present in K–12<sup>th</sup> grade, it declines incrementally at the undergraduate level through graduate school, resulting in a lack of diversity in workplace and in academia.

Diversity has a broad meaning, including diversity of thought, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability, and race and ethnicity. The AAFS currently does not request information about diversity in membership requirements; however, in a 2012 statement in the *Academy News*, the President-Elect discussed the lack of African Americans and Hispanics in the forensic sciences and noted that “looking around the room at the scientific or social functions held during the annual meeting reveals that we are a largely Caucasian organization”.<sup>2</sup> Many forensic science fields require advanced degrees; however, because of the “leaky pipeline,” forensic anthropology, like other disciplines, lacks diversity in graduate students, applied professionals, and academics.

Within the Department of Anthropology at Texas State University (TSU), graduate student applications from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups have increased over the past ten years. These applicants indicate that faculty research and applied programs with a focus on underrepresented groups makes the graduate program attractive. To document diversity in research within forensic anthropology, a literature review was performed focusing on the *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, the flagship journal of the AAFS. A keyword search using “forensic anthropology” was initiated and refined using the search terms “ancestry” and “race” from 2006–2018. Each article was reviewed for the population groups used (e.g., Black, Hispanic) and each group was recorded, using the same terminology within the publication. Although the search terms focused on ancestry, the returns included overlap with sex, stature, and age estimation, as well as other foci and included 199 publications.

The majority of publications (81) focused on one group, 59 on two groups, 26 on three groups, 15 on four groups, and 18 on five or more groups. A total of 22 publications focused on White only, 34 European only (with 6 using White North Americans), and 23 Black and White only. Of the papers focusing on White individuals only, 14 focused on developing new methods or validating methods. Papers focusing solely on Hispanics, Central Americans, Western or Eastern Europeans, Southeast Asians, or South Africans typically focused on generating population-specific techniques lacking in the literature.

The majority of recent skeletal collections in the United States are predominantly White, followed by Black, with more males than females. However, these collections also contain individuals that are Hispanic, Southeast Asian, and Middle Eastern, in addition to other groups, although in lesser numbers. While travel outside the country may be cost prohibitive without grant funding, data sharing, and data from Computed Tomography (CT) scans obtained from hospitals and health science centers can also increase data from underrepresented groups. Incorporating diverse groups into the development of new methods and validation studies should be a priority to improve practice and increase diversity in graduate students and professionals within our field.

#### Reference(s):

1. Wagstaff I.R., LaPorte G. The Importance of Diversity and Inclusion in the Forensic Sciences. *NIJ Journal*. 2018; 279:1-11.
2. Logan, B.K.. President-Elect Message. *Academy News*. 2012; 42:3.

#### Forensic Anthropology, Diversity, Graduate Students