Lab. 3 Ancestry/Race Determination

Objectives: Perhaps one of the most challenging tasks a forensic anthropologist must face is determining ancestry, or race, from skeletal remains. Problems occur because there are no generally agreed upon criteria to define racial groups in humans, the nature of variation within and between populations, and the effects of interbreeding among human populations. At the morphological level, there are some generalizations available for determining ancestry. Most of the latter morphological differences are confined to the skull, although differences in dentition and the postcranial skeleton have also been noted. Further, discriminant function analysis has been used with varying success in assigning an unknown specimen to one or more broad racial groups. In this laboratory, the student will gain some familiarity with determining ancestry from the skull using a variety of morphological criteria.

Reading: Read (& bring to lab) Ch. 7 in Byers (2011a) and Byers (2011b). Further consult the other assigned reading for ancestry determination.

Exercise 1: Following Exercises 7.1 and 7.3 determine the ancestry of three skulls, one each from three groups. Use Exercise Worksheets 7.1 & 7.3 to arrive at your final determination based on Cranial anthroposcopy and discriminant function results. In addition to the worksheets, provide a short written summary of your final ancestry determination for each skull.

Skulls:

Group 1: CS011, CS018, or BC-107

Group 2: CS008, BC110, or CS108

Group 3: BC-016 or CS012

Exercise 2. Determining ancestry in postcranial remains. Following Exercise 7.4 and using Exercise Worksheet 7.4 in your lab manual, determine the ancestry of Specimen A and Specimen B.