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**Underestimating intraspecific variation: the problem with excluding Sts 19 from *Australopithecus africanus*.** J. C. M. AHERN.  
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Recently, it has been proposed that early *Homo* is represented among the *Australopithecus africanus* sample from Sterkfontein Member 4. Two analyses, in particular, conclude that Sts 19 cannot be accommodated within the *A. africanus* hypodigm (Kimbel and Rak, 1993; Sarmiento, 1993). Both of these studies exclude Sts 19 because of its possession of synapomorphies with *Homo*. Furthermore, Kimbel and Rak (1993) conclude that including Sts 19 in *A. africanus* results in an unacceptably high degree of polymorphism.

This study aims to refute the null hypothesis that Sts 19 belongs to *A. africanus*. Twelve basicranial characters, as defined and implemented in Kimbel's and Rak's study, were scored for casts of six *A. africanus* and four *Homo habilis* basicranial specimens available for study. These characters were also examined on specimens from two large (N>60) samples of *Gorilla gorilla* and *Pan troglodytes* crania.

Contrary to Kimbel's and Rak's findings, the null hypothesis is not refuted. For seven of the characters, all hominid character states are found within the pongid taxa and thus should be considered plesiomorphic (*contra* Kimbel and Rak, 1993). Moreover, the pongids in this study are much more polymorphic than those reported in Kimbel's and Rak's analysis. In fact, the degree of polymorphism in *G. gorilla* is as high as that found among *A. africanus* with Sts 19 included. Of the twelve characters used, only one (orientation of the petrous) is valid for distinguishing Sts 19 from other *A. africanus* specimens. Although some (e.g., Tattersall, 1986, 1992) propose that even a single apomorphy may be indicative of specific difference, such a conclusion in a case of a single specimen with a single apomorphy is unwarranted.