A Novel Approach to Addressing Changes of Opinions in Latent Prints

Sabrina S. Cillessen
Physical Evidence Program Manger
Virginia Department of Forensic Science

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Change of Opinion

- Is not an error
- Does not necessitate conflict resolution
- Is to be expected when different or additional information is used to reach the conclusion/opinion
New Information

• Aerial perspective
  – Illusion of depth created by less detail added to distant objects and modifying colors (use of blue)

• Horizon line level
  – The eyes are at the center of the viewer’s attention

• Sfumato technique
  – Not a smile, but a shadow of her cheeks
Verification Procedures

• All comparison conclusions verified
  – Identification
  – Inconclusive
  – Exclusion

• “No value” decisions reviewed

• www.dfs.virginia.gov
Verification Procedures

- Open vs. Blind
- Cases randomly selected for blind verification
Documentation Requirements

• Independent documented conclusions
Consultation

• Examiners have a one on one discussion when a difference in opinion occurs

• Documented in case file

• Not a Corrective Action
Data

- 104 instances

- Consensus not reached in 1 instance
Data

• Change of opinion occurs in open and in blind verification
  – 46 Open
  – 58 Blind

• Demonstrates confirmation and/or contextual bias might not be a factor
Data

Frequency of Reason for Change of Opinion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation/Pattern Type</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature Weight/Selection</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latent Distortion</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Exemplars</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification Techniques</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data

Categories of Changes
(original examiner/verifier/reported conclusion)
Data

- Original Examiner conclusion reported 38%
- Verifier conclusion reported 62%
Data

• No indication that years of experience correlates to frequency of change of opinion
Training

• Based on trends observed
  – Clarification techniques
  – Orientation
Culture Shift

• It is okay to change your opinion when presented with new information
• A subjective opinion that is documented
Culture Shift

- Open communication
- Removal of stigma
- Less stress
Summary

• A change of opinion is not an error
• Verification and consultation are valuable
• Documentation of the basis for the conclusion is crucial