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Summary of seminar



FINGERPRINTS ON THE BRAIN



Presented to

**The Fingerprint Society
United Kingdom**



Presented on

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Presented by

Cognitive Consultants International

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We thank you for the opportunity to deliver the “Fingerprints on the Brain” seminar to the Fingerprint Society. We are especially honoured that the Fingerprint Society has decided to dedicate their first ever education seminar to this issue. We hope the seminar was of interest and benefit to all those who took part, and that we can be of further assistance in the future. Below we summarise the seminar with the following sections:

1. Background
2. Overview
3. Evaluation and reflections by the instructor
4. Summary of feedback questionnaires provided by the participants
5. Appendix: the participants feedback questionnaires

1. Background

Forensic identification in general, and fingerprint identification specifically, plays a pivotal role in policing and the criminal justice system. Although it is well-established and accepted evidence, the work involved in fingerprint identification requires human perception, judgement, and decision-making. Fingerprint experts receive training; however, this training does not sufficiently address the latest issues at the forefront of forensic identification.

The Fingerprint Society wants to introduce to its members the potential to further advance forensic examiners with the latest research and findings in the area of cognition. To achieve this goal, The Fingerprint Society commissioned Cognitive Consultants International (CCI) to provide a one-day seminar in this area.

The seminar was the first ever educational seminar provided by the Fingerprint Society. This activity was the brain child of Kevin Kershaw who initiated it and was the driving force behind it. Helping with the huge amount of work needed to organise such an event were David Sweeney, Richard Marks, and Richard Case from Greater Manchester Police.

2. Overview

The one-day seminar was delivered by Dr Itiel Dror and took place at Sedgley Park in Manchester on the 10th of November 2007. Over fifty delegates took part in the seminar from a cross-section of over seventeen different police forces and professional organisations across the country. The seminar took place over the weekend, on a Saturday, and many delegates --especially those who needed to commute from far away-- arrived an evening earlier and stayed at the accommodations provided at Sedgley Park.

The morning consisted of presentations and demonstrations geared to introduce the participants to the scientific knowledge that pertains to how the mind and the brain perceive and evaluate information, and how decisions are made. The afternoon was focused on taking the more theoretical information covered earlier in the day and connecting it to very practical issues in fingerprint analysis, comparison, evaluation and verification. This included an overview of the latest research in the area of forensic decision making, and the latest discussions and decisions on these issues in US and UK courts. At the end of the seminar, each participant filled-in a feedback questionnaire (see Section 4 and the Appendix).

3. Evaluation and reflections by the instructor

The seminar took place on a Saturday, and it was very impressive to see forensic experts that were dedicating their weekend to enhance their professional development.

The seminar was received extremely well and very appreciated by the participants (see, below, their comments and evaluation, which speak for themselves). The main objective of the seminar was to stimulate and open their minds to the latest and most challenging issues in the areas of psychology and bias within the domain of latent print examination. This main objective was fully achieved, even beyond expectation.

The seminar successfully engaged the participants to think and reflect about the human element in their everyday processes and procedures. The participants' interest was successfully engaged, the atmosphere was good and the delegates were relaxed and actively participated.

The seminar was too short to allow in-depth examination of a topic of such complexity. Furthermore, the large number of delegates, over 50, did not allow for a lot of discussions and interactions. Finally, with such a large number of participants it was not possible to do practical and hands-on exercises that should be an important and integral part of a workshop in this area. Nevertheless there were good discussions and interactions, and participants were able to ask questions and raise concerns.

To summarise, the seminar introduced complex and sensitive issues but was received very well by the participants. It was not intended to train the participants in the area of cognitive bias, which would be more fully explored in a dedicated two-day event with a smaller number of participants. The seminar achieved and surpassed all of its objectives and expectations, and the feedback of the participants is a testimony to this success.

4. Summary of feedback questionnaires

Participants filled-in post-seminar feedback questionnaires which are summarised below (the original responses and raw data are provided in the Appendix). Participants were instructed to fill-in the questionnaires and were given an option to provide their names and forces/organisations or to fill it in anonymously.

Participants first rated the seminar on these dimensions: Overall, Delivery, Clarity, Interesting, Helpful, Challenging, and the Lecturer. For each of these dimensions they provided a score with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5 (1= very low, 2= low, 3= average, 4= high, and 5= very high).

Forty-seven questionnaires were returned. The participants' scores for all the different aspects of the seminar were extremely positive:

- i. From all the participants, and all the dimensions, not a single participant ranked any as 'very low' or even as 'low'. Thus, from a total of 337

rankings (see below), none were ‘very low’ or ‘low’. The distribution of rankings were: 16 ‘average’ (a score of 3), 144 ‘high’ (a score of 4), and 177 were the highest possible ranking, a ‘very high’ (the maximum score of 5).

- ii. Overall the seminar received an mean ranking score of 4.54 (on a scale 1-5), and all dimensions received very impressive mean rankings, varying from 4.27 to 4.65. Thus, all dimensions received a mean ranking higher than ‘high’.
- iii. The participants feedback reflected that the seminar was both ‘interesting’ and ‘challenging’, as well as ‘helpful’. Thus reflecting both the knowledge gained and its practicality implications.
- iv. The rankings are strikingly high in absolute terms, but one needs to also consider them relative to the fact that the seminar was about a controversial and unpleasant topic of expert bias and error. This further enhances and magnifies the very positive feedback and evaluation of the participants.

The actual rating and frequencies for each dimension are presented in the table below (in the Appendix we provide the original questionnaires).

	1 Very low	2 Low	3 Average	4 High	5 Very high	<u>Average rating</u>
Overall:	0	0	1	20	27	4.54
Delivery:	0	0	1	19	28	4.56
Clarity:	0	0	5	25	18	4.27
Interesting:	0	0	0	17	31	4.65
Helpful:	0	0	5	22	20	4.32
Challenging:	0	0	4	21	23	4.40
Lecturer						
Dr Itiel Dror:	0	0	0	17	30	4.64

Participants were also asked to judge if the seminar was pitched at a level ‘way too low’, ‘too low’, ‘just right’, ‘too high’, or ‘way too high’. All the participants, except one, stated that the seminar was pitched at a level ‘just right’; a single participant felt that it was pitched ‘too high’.

Then, in the open questions, participants were asked to specify ‘strengths’, ‘weaknesses’ and were given space for ‘additional comments’. Below we specify all the participants’ comments (the original feedback questionnaires are provided in the appendix):

Strengths:

- Introduced a new way of thinking and approach to comparison work.
- Itiel was very robust on cross-examination.
- Very interesting topics were raised at various different times throughout the day.
- Willingness to recognise problems with current research, open to questions and discussions, very approachable.
- Very interesting, especially the experiments and visual tricks the brain can play.
- Good interpersonal skills, well-worked PowerPoint, backed up opinions with research.
- Good delivery, interesting and entertaining examples.
- Challenging lecture, which will make me think.
- Very stimulating. Really interesting to hear about something a little different.
- Very good delivery of information. It could have been quite overwhelming, but it was talked about at the right level and made extremely interesting.
- Definitely food for thought – a challenging time ahead for the profession! A humorous and well presented talk.
- Organisation: - Excellent delivery!
- Good range of material to keep interesting and well presented.
- Knowledge and passion of presenter. Useful illustrations of key points to provide audience with challenges.
- Very interesting – some excellent points to go away and ponder.
- Interesting. Thought provoking.
- Smooth use of overhead – it just flowed.
- Clear delivery, good pace.
- Very good – methodical and well structured.
- Good illustrations, knowledgeable explanations.
- Delivered with clarity and enthusiasm.
- Conceptual bias section was very interesting and information on the studies carried out.
- Strength in introducing bias.
- Lecturer knowledge/experience.
- Interesting throughout, a good opportunity to hear a different perspective of the way we work.
- . Itiel is a natural, engaging presenter who is clearly concerned with fact and not placating a particular group.
- Extremely interesting topic, lots of topical issues to think about. Very informative and knowledgeable speaker.
- Made me feel like I want to do some research!
- Made you think about a lot of issues.
- Gave me a good awareness of this subject.
- Pitched with candour and humour. Pace and entertainment mixed with the “heavy” information.
- Thought provoking and stimulating.
- Enthusiastic and willing to take on anyone’s opinions.
- Worth spending a Saturday on learning and development

Weaknesses:

- Not long enough!
- Length of seminar could be developed into 24 hour or 2-day event.
- Did not go into court issues, e.g. how to answer potential questions relating to contextual bias. Left feeling as though these issues were not discussed.
- Sometimes interrupted people's questions, although this may be due to time constraints.
- Insufficient time for debate.
- Could do with two days.
- Weaker when applied directly to fingerprints in the afternoon.
- Felt that limited number of experts used for assessment.
- Concerned with the word bias as it suggests personal bias perhaps to those who have not an understanding.
- Almost too much information in such a short space of time.
- Not enough opportunity for practitioner input.
- None – well, maybe wanted to hear more – I will try to persuade HOB to organise an in-force seminar.
- None.
- More courtroom would have been good.
- Order of presentation and perhaps Dr Dror is not fully informed about UK practice – never explained if USA problems relate directly to UK.
- Operational knowledge/experience.
- None.
- Needed slightly more examples, felt the Mayfield session was the weakest and time could have been used better.
- Slightly too intellectually based.
- Some of the information was a bit rushed, I think it would have been best as a two day seminar (but then it is based on one!)
- Sometimes too technical, comparison with Air Forces and Navy is not relevant. Some research too vague.
- Not long enough.
- Long and intensive day – awful lot of important info to take in.
- I would have liked to have had a chance to do hands on examples.
- Too short – i.e. defence in court.
- Wished to know more – not enough time!! Would like to know more of court challenges
- Two days would be appropriate.

Additional comments:

- Very useful session.
- Very thought provoking and identifying issues that cannot be avoided but with additional knowledge will enhance and not damage the profession.
- Excellent – thank you Itiel.
- Brilliant seminar – would recommend it to all forensic professionals.
- Too short – two days would have been better.
- In the UK experts are more likely to say that they are capable of making mistakes, so perhaps labour slightly less on this point and focus more on cognitive 'effects' and how to resolve them/deal with them.
- Excellent venue – conference facilities and accommodation both top rate considering the cost.

- Very encouraging first seminar. Interest was maintained throughout the day.
- Interesting. Highlighted some things never seen before (gorilla). Good perception. Provided food for thought.
- Very interesting – thank you.
- Visual exercises/examples were very useful to reinforce what you were saying.
- Well worth sacrificing my Saturday. Thought provoking!
- I will be doing some more reading on the topic myself!
- Would like to see a longer seminar.
- Already attended the seminar so I knew what to expect but still found today stimulating and useful. Excellent.
- Thanks.
- Overall enjoyable.
- Very good.
- Well organised.
- Thanks Itiel, it was inspiring.